CHICKADEE-DEE AND HIS FRIENDS

LYLE WARD SANDERSON

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CHICKADEE-DEE AND HIS FRIENDS

"'I'm Pretty Good at Getting Insects out from under the Bark'"

Page 14

CHICKADEE-DEE AND HIS FRIENDS

BY

LYLE WARD SANDERSON

WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOR AND EIGHT IN BLACK-AND-WHITE

BY

SIDNEY T. CALLOWHILL

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TO

HELEN, DOROTHEA, PAGE, AND JOHN

THIS BOOK IS LOVINGLY DEDICATED

BY THE AUTHOR

PREFACE

Frank M. Chapman urges, "If you would reap the purest pleasures of youth, manhood, and old age, go to the birds and through them be brought within the ennobling influences of Nature. Go yourself to the field and learn that birds do not exist solely in books, but are concrete, sentient beings, whose acquaintance may bring you more unalloyed happiness than the wealth of the Indies."

These little stories have been written with the hope that they may cause many children to make the acquaintance of the birds of the orchard and meadow, and to feel a very friendly interest in them.

The author is greatly indebted to many standard authorities on bird-life. Thanks are due to *John Martin's Book,* a magazine for little children, for kind permission to reprint two of these stories, and to other periodicals for similar courtesy.

L. W. S.

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CHICKADEE-DEE AND HIS FRIENDS

I

CHICKADEE-DEE AND HIS CHUM

CHICKADEE-DEE flew swiftly over to the old oak-tree, one bright morning, and whistled loudly for his chum, Nutty, to join him.

Mrs. Nuthatch heard him and poked her head out the window. "You'll have to wait, Chickadee-dee," she said, "till I get Nutty's suit mended, he's torn it again." So Chickadee-dee waited, whistling merrily all the while.

It was a clear, cold day, but Chickadee-dee was warmly dressed in a light sweater under his gray suit. He wore a little black cap, and a black necktie under his chin.

Nutty Nuthatch was a little larger than his chum. He, too, always wore a light sweater,

gray suit and black cap. But he never bothered with a necktie.

"I'll beat you to the hickory-tree!" cried Chickadee-dee when Nutty appeared. "Come on!" and off they raced. Chickadee-dee bobbed along as fast as he could fly, but Nutty reached the goal first, just by the flick of a wing.

Old Mr. Downy Woodpecker, who was clinging to the trunk of the hickory-tree, watched the race with much interest.

"Good work, Nutty!" he cried. "I'm glad you birds are getting your muscle up. You'll need it when the time comes for you to keep all these tree trunks and branches free from harmful grubs and insects, the way I have to."

"My muscle's pretty good," said Chickadee-dee eagerly.

"What can you do, little fellow? Can you hop backwards down a tree trunk the way Woodpeckers do?"

"I can do this," said Chickadee-dee. Seizing tight hold of a little twig he proceeded to stand on his head, while he picked out a tiny grub from the bark with his sharp little bill. He was

"Chickadee-dee Wore a Little Black Cap, and a Necktie. Nutty Nuthatch Was a Little Larger Than His Chum"

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in very good practise, for he often stood on his head while eating his dinner. And his mother never reproved him for it either.

"Pretty good! Pretty good!" said old Mr. Woodpecker, who had been a great athlete in his youth. "Can you do that, Nutty?"

Nutty gave a merry "quank, quank," and taking tight hold with his toes ran head downward the entire length of a branch.

He did it easily, too. All his chums acknowledged he was the best acrobat in the crowd. And his mother was afraid he would run away and join the circus.

Then Chickadee-dee jumped onto a twig, swung himself down under it, then up again, making a complete somersault, like a human acrobat doing the "giant swing."

How Mr. Woodpecker laughed! "Well, well, you birds are quite a team!"

But it remained for Nutty Nuthatch to do the most wonderful feat. Up he ran to the top of the tree and started to come down the trunk head first. Keeping his feet wide apart, and fastening his hook-like claws firmly into the rough

bark, he descended swiftly, not even using his little square tail for a brace.

"Fine! Fine!" cried old Mr. Woodpecker, who had never done anything like that even in his youth. "Guess you'll spy out every meddling insect under the bark. You deserve a prize. Here's a beechnut for you, and one for Chickadee-dee."

Chickadee-dee did not care for nuts, for he never could open them with his little bill.

"I'll crack yours, too," said Nutty. Wedging them firmly in a crevice of the bark, he hacked them open with his long, stouter bill.

Inside of Chickadee-dee's nut was a white grub, so sweet that Chickadee-dee sang for joy. It was much nicer than candy, to his mind. Besides he felt proud that a bird as big and smart as Nutty had chosen him for his chum.

When the two went home Mrs. Nuthatch was watching out the window. "Come right in, Nutty," she said. "You've torn your suit again on that rough bark, and I shall have to mend it." But she did not scold him very much, she was so afraid he would run away and join the circus.

II

CHICKADEE-DEE AND WICKED MR. SHRIKE

"WHERE are you going, Chickadee-dee?" asked his mother one afternoon as Chickadee-dee was starting off.

"Over to Nutty Nuthatch's, mother. I promised I'd be over early."

Mrs. Chickadee shook her head. "I think you'd better fly around here instead to-day, dear. I don't like to have you go so far."

"Don't try to coop that bird up in the tree," instructed Mr. Chickadee. "He'll never be good for much if you do."

"But you know who's been prowling round here. I don't know what I'd do if anything happened to Chickadee-dee," said Mrs. Chickadee, who was a little nervous.

"Pooh, that Perkins Cat!" scoffed Mr. Chickadee who, although afraid of the cat himself,

liked to tease his wife. "You worry all the time about that Perkins Cat. Chickadee-dee has got to learn to look out for himself."

"Well, go then, Chickadee-dee, but start home early," said his mother, and with anxious, loving eyes she watched him fly off.

Well might she worry about her small son. Other eyes not kind and loving were watching Chickadee-dee, as he bobbed merrily along across the Beautiful Meadow toward the old oak-tree where his chum lived.

The hawk-like eyes of wicked Mr. Shrike, who was perched high in the top of the tallest elm, noted him well.

Mr. Shrike was keeping very quiet that cold autumn day, and nobody knew he was about. Whenever his harsh voice was heard there was always fear and dismay among the feathered folk along the Creek.

Dreadful stories were told of wicked Mr. Shrike, who always came from his home in the North to spend the winter where it was warmer. Often he had been known to chase little bird children, Song Sparrows, Juncos, and little Tree

"The Hawk-like Eyes of Wicked Mr. Shrike Noted Chicka-dee-dee Well"

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Sparrows. And more than one he had caught and carried off.

Sometimes he would hide himself away so carefully and keep so quiet that no one would ever dream he was near.

Again he would perch in the top of the tallest elm, his favorite place. From that high point the wicked bird could look over the whole of the Beautiful Meadow, and plan his mischief.

Feared and hated by all, he roamed the fields, ever watching, watching carefully. He was large and always dressed in gray. His wings and tail were black, edged and tipped with white. His hooked bill gave him a cruel expression.

Chickadee-dee truly meant to mind his mother and start home early. But he and Nutty Nuthatch got very much excited romping all over the old oak-tree. They stood on their heads, turned somersaults, and did all the tricks they could think of. Old Mr. Woodpecker would have enjoyed watching them; but poor Mrs. Nuthatch was almost distracted with their noise.

At last they began a game of flying tag. But

when they were in the midst of it Chickadee-dee, surprised to find it growing dusky, remembered his mother's words and started for home.

As he hurried along he kept thinking about the Perkins Cat, and that didn't make him feel any braver. But it was not the Perkins Cat who was watching for him.

No one of the Chickadee family is a strong flyer. Chickadee-dee's mother had taught him not to attempt long flights in the open, but to go from one sheltering tree or bush to another.

As the little fellow hurried along he whistled a bit to keep up his courage; but, oh, how lonesome he felt!

When he heard a low twittering in some alder bushes he flew toward them, thinking his mother had come to meet him. But it was not his mother's sweet voice.

Out from the alder bushes sprang a dreadful form. Straight at Chickadee-dee it flew, its hawk-like eyes agleam.

Chickadee-dee gave one look, then turned. Oh, how he flew! Wicked Mr. Shrike, close after him.

Faster and faster went Chickadee-dee—if he could only pass the fence and hide in the thick cedar-tree! But faster still flew Mr. Shrike.

Inch by inch he gained on the little fellow. Chickadee-dee heard the snap of his dreadful bill. He felt him reaching out to strike, when —the Perkins Cat, leaping from the fence, hit wicked Mr. Shrike, knocking him head over tail.

Chickadee-dee, half scared to death, rushed on. When at last he reached home he had hardly breath enough left to tell of his dreadful adventure.

"There, Mrs. Chickadee," said Mr. Chickadee. "Now, I hope you'll stop worrying about that Perkins Cat! After all there are worse things in the world than cats, and Chickadee-dee must learn to watch out."

In spite of his brave words Mrs. Chickadee noticed that little Chickadee-dee was not allowed to go out again alone, as long as wicked Mr. Shrike remained in the neighborhood.

III

CHICKADEE-DEE AND THE LANDLORD

THERE was great excitement along the Creek one morning when it became known that the Nuthatch family had been warned out of their home in the old oak-tree.

Mr. Nuthatch had been sick and was 'way behind on the rent. The landlord, Mr. Woodpecker, who had built the house himself, wouldn't stand it any longer.

When Chickadee-dee flew over to play with his chum, Nutty Nuthatch, he found the whole family in great trouble. "You birds fly along and play," they were told, but Nutty did not feel much like playing.

From across the Creek came a ringing sound, so Chickadee-dee flew off alone to see what it was.

When he reached the big Porter apple-tree he

found old Mr. Woodpecker clinging to an upper dead branch hammering away with all his might.

Old Mr. Downy Woodpecker always dressed rather gaily. His black coat over his white vest was striped and barred with white. He always wore his tiny red cap on the back of his head.

"Hello, Chickadee-dee," he said, "it's a cold morning."

"Yes, Mr. Woodpecker," said little Chickadee-dee. "You're pretty busy, aren't you?"

"Busy, well, I've got to keep busy if I'm going to get this house done ready to shelter me these cold fall nights."

"Is it going to be a big house, Mr. Woodpecker?"

Now Mr. Woodpecker was a gruff old fellow who usually wouldn't stop to talk to any one. But he liked little Chickadee-dee and was pleased to have him seek his society.

"Well, not as big as my summer house. But I shall dig in deep so it will be nice and warm." And old Mr. Woodpecker drew back his head

and struck with all his force, sending his strong beak, which he used for a chisel, deep into the wood. He drilled away rapidly, striking out small chips. He was an expert carpenter and was forever building houses.

"Now when I've slept in this house all winter," he confided to Chickadee-dee, "I'll rent it in the spring and build another for myself. That Wren family will doubtless want it." Mr. Woodpecker had a good many tenements to rent along the Creek. "And if they shouldn't happen to care for it," he went on, "some of your folks or the Tree Swallow family will probably take it."

"My! It must keep you busy making so many houses," said Chickadee-dee, thinking of the poor Nuthatch family without a house to their name, and wishing he could help them.

"Oh, yes. It takes about all my time looking after my houses and those rascally tenants that won't pay their rent or build for themselves. I have to neglect some of these tree trunks and branches. I don't have time to get all these

harmful grubs and insects that are injuring them out from under the bark the way I'd like to."

Then little Chickadee-dee gave a hop of joy. "Oh, Mr. Woodpecker, couldn't I help you? I'm pretty good at getting insects out from under the bark. I'll come and work for you every morning, if you'll only let the Nuthatches stay in their house."

How old Mr. Woodpecker laughed! "Well, well, Chickadee-dee, if you'll only put in an hour or so every day helping me clean up these apple-trees, I'll see what can be done for that Nuthatch family."

So all that winter Chickadee-dee worked about the Orchard with old Mr. Woodpecker, and the Nuthatches remained undisturbed in their home.

IV

WHERE CHICKADEE-DEE SPENT THE NIGHT

CHICKADEE-DEE and his chum were on their way to spend the afternoon with Chickadee-dee's grandmother. It was a long way for them to go, but wicked Mr. Shrike had left the neighborhood. The Perkins Cat was staying in the house nursing a sore paw, so there seemed to be little danger.

Away to the upper end of the Creek they flew, and entered the thick woods at the foot of the hill.

When at last they reached the big pine-tree where Grandma Chickadee lived, they were much surprised to find that she was away from home.

It seems that poor Grandma Chickadee had been having a dreadful time. The Red Squirrels had come and camped not far from her house and had frightened her almost to pieces.

They were a wicked band bent on mischief. And, as the spring advanced, old lady Chickadee knew they would like nothing better than to destroy bird houses, eat up new eggs, and even steal and carry off tiny bird children. Just to hear their wild chattering had made her so nervous, that that very day she had left her home and gone to stay with a neighbor.

Of course Chickadee-dee did not know about this. He wondered what had become of his grandmother. He was much disappointed, and so was Nutty, not to find her.

Both of them were very hungry, as birds generally are. Chickadee-dee knew that his grandmother usually had some goodies tucked away somewhere for him.

Now Chickadee-dee and Nutty ought to have gone straight home, instead of staying and rummaging all over Grandma Chickadee's pine-tree house. But Nutty went creeping all around the trunk. Chickadee-dee went hopping over the branches, peeping into every corner, poking his little bill into every crack and crevice.

And sure enough, pretty soon Chickadee-dee

found some nice little grubs that his grandmother had doubtless been saving for him, tucked away under the bark. Very quickly indeed he and Nutty ate them all up. Oh, how good they were!

Then the two started in to have a game of tag. They romped and frolicked all over the house. They stood on their heads and had such a wild time that they failed to notice that it was growing dark.

It was just as well that Grandma Chickadee was away. She never could have stood the racket.

At last a big snowflake hit Chickadee-dee on the end of his bill. "Oh, Nutty, it's going to storm! We'd better go home!" he cried.

Off they started; but in a few seconds the snowflakes came faster and thicker. "Whe—ew," came the North Wind, whistling through the pines.

Oh, how it blew! the squall coming suddenly, as it often does in early spring. It almost blew the feathers off little Chickadee-dee's back. It

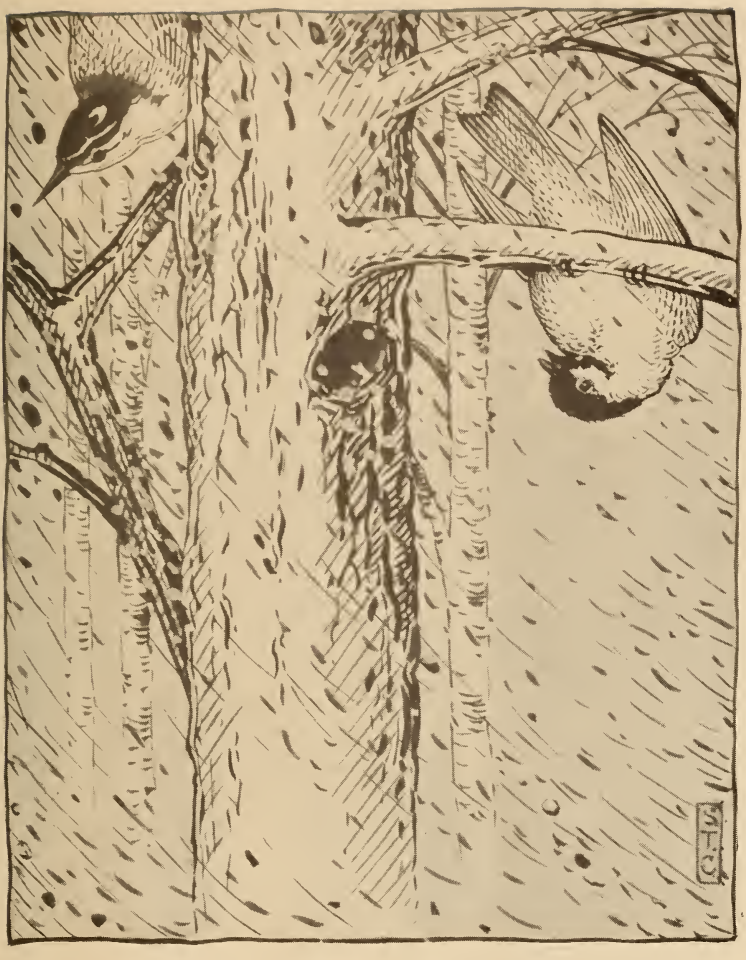
grew dark in the woods. He could scarcely see Nutty Nuthatch in front of him.

"Quank! Quank!" Nutty kept calling back encouragingly. But the North Wind was so fierce he could not fly against it.

It carried him and Chickadee-dee quite out of their course. It took them, bobbing and scurrying, on up the hill, farther and farther away from home. And many other little birds, and many small animals in fur coats as well, were caught and stranded by the storm.

At last a tremendous gust landed Chickadee-dee and Nutty among the branches of a big hemlock-tree that had a broken top. For a time they could only cling to the bark, quite exhausted. After a while Chickadee-dee hopped round to the other side of the tree. And there, under a branch, was a big hole.

"Oh, Nutty, come on; here's shelter from the North Wind," cried Chickadee-dee. The two tired little birds crawled gratefully into the refuge, without a thought of any danger that might be within. Yes, into that unknown place they went, glad to escape from the stinging cold.



"'Here's Shelter from the North Wind,' Cried Chickadee-dee"

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It was very dark inside, and they could not tell what might be down in the bottom of the hole. They did not dare move about.

Nutty Nuthatch actually hung himself upside down on the wall, as was his habit. He and Chickadee-dee soon went sound asleep, quite unmindful of any peril.

But when the sun peeped in the next morning and woke up Chickadee-dee and his chum, something else was peeping in the door at them: two big eyes, a sharp nose, two red, furry ears! Yes, Mr. Red Squirrel himself, Captain of the dreadful band, gazed into his cave, gazed angrily at the intruders.

Chickadee-dee sprang up in terror. Nutty Nuthatch gave such a cry that Captain Squirrel, startled, fell back from the entrance. And the two darted out past him and flew for their lives.

So frightened were they that they did not stop till they were back in Grandma Chickadee's house.

When they told their story to the old lady, who had returned home, she gasped in horror. "Oh, Chickadee-dee, was it the big hemlock with

the broken top? Then you birds must have spent the night right in the robbers' den. Dear me, dear me! If the storm had not kept them away till morning, who knows what would have become of you!"

V

CHICKADEE-DEE AND THE CHRISTMAS TREE

FOR many days it had been cold and stormy. The wind howled along the Creek. The trees were loaded with snow and ice. Toward the last of December the drifts were high and the cold steadily increasing.

Old Mr. Woodpecker was glad he had finished his house in the Porter apple-tree. He stayed in it a good deal for shelter. It was hard for him to fly against the heavy wind.

Even little Chickadee-dee, warmly dressed in his gray suit and sweater, found it wearisome work to fly about in the storms. Yet fly he must, or starve and freeze.

It was no fun for him to try to cling to an ice-covered twig and dig out a grub that was firmly frozen in, while the wind nearly blew off his little black cap.

The little fellow grew thin. Mrs. Chickadee, his mother, grew thin, so did old Mr. Woodpecker and the Nuthatch family. The fact was they could not get enough to eat.

Mrs. Chickadee, who was usually very cheerful, began to grow discouraged. She worried about Chickadee-dee and her other children.

One morning, when the snow was still falling, she heard a shrill twittering in the air. Soon a band of Juncos, that were traveling about, lighted near. They looked dark against the snow. They wore their slate-colored hoods pulled far down over their heads. Their little vests gleamed white beneath. Their tiny bills were light yellow, they kept moving restlessly about. Their leader hurried to Mrs. Chickadee.

"Oh, pray," he begged, "can you tell us if there are any seeds about here? We've had no breakfast and we are very, very hungry."

"I wish I could help you!" cried Mrs. Chickadee. "Right over there by that fence there were a great many seeds. But I'm afraid you can't get them, the snow has covered them so."

"Yes, I don't know when I've seen such drifts,

or such cold Christmas weather," said the Junco leader who, as he spent much time in the north, was a good judge of drifts. "I really don't know what we are to do!"

Mrs. Chickadee felt very badly to think the visitors must go hungry on Christmas day. She called her son. "Come, Chickadee-dee, fly around and see if you can't find some seed-stalks sticking up through the snow."

Away went Chickadee-dee through the storm. His eyes were bright but no seed-stalks could he spy.

At last he left the Orchard and ventured along the village street. From the church near by came the sound of music, voices singing sweet carols. The tiny bird, still hopeful, joined in with his cheery "dee-dee-dee."

Back into the garden of a big white house flew Chickadee-dee. But even there everything was banked high with snow. Something bright in the window of the house caught his eye. Made bold by hunger the little fellow actually lighted on the sill. Behind the glass hung a beautiful

Christmas wreath of evergreen, tied with bright ribbon and studded over with red berries.

How Chickadee-dee wished he could pick at those berries, perhaps they were good to eat. But who could get them there behind the pane? They were not for him. The hungry little bird turned away and bobbed around the corner of the house.

He lighted on a snowy bush and looked about. And there, quite near, was the oddest thing. "Why, what is this?" cried Chickadee-dee. He looked more carefully.

Fastened on a shelf just outside the south window of the big house was a little tree, a little pine-tree. It was not covered with snow like the other bushes, but there seemed to be something white on it. Chickadee-dee caught the gleam of red. Yes, there were bright berries fastened to it. Whatever could it be?

Chickadee-dee gave a cry and darted to the shelf.

"Oh, my! oh, my!" he cried. "I've found a Christmas tree, a little Christmas tree, a real little Christmas tree!"

And then he buried his bill in the soft white suet, that was tied, like a nice little Christmas parcel, to a branch of the tree, and ate and ate and ate. With each mouthful the little starving bird grew warmer and happier.

In a moment he stopped and uttering a "dee-dee-dee" of thanks started off. "I must tell the others," thought he, and home he flew as fast as he could go.

"Oh, mother," he called, "come quick! All the Juncos come, everybody come! Come and see the Christmas tree, I've found a Christmas tree!"

His little voice rang through the Meadow. He called to his chum, Nutty Nuthatch, to fly and tell old Mr. Woodpecker and Grandma Chickadee.

Proudly he led the way back to the big white house. "Now what do you think of that?" cried he as the party drew near the tree.

Every one began to twitter with excitement and delight, for they saw that the tree held presents for all. Tied to its branches were nice little meaty bones, that were oh, so good to

peck at, pieces of nuts and white suet. On the shelf and on the snow beneath all kinds of seeds and crumbs were scattered.

Nobody waited for ceremony, there was plenty for all. Each took the present he liked best. The hungry Junco band began to pick up the seeds and crumbs with astonishing speed. Old Mr. Woodpecker, when he came, was greatly pleased with nice meaty bones.

What a merry party it was! The snow had ceased falling. Every bird, for the first time for many days, was having all he wanted to eat. From behind the curtains of the house children's smiling faces peeped out to watch the fun.

Nutty Nuthatch pecked away at the nuts and stood on his head with glee. Old Mr. Woodpecker declared that the good fat meat made him feel like a boy again. Chickadee-dee was perfectly delighted with a large seed, which he held in his little black toes and daintily picked out of its shell.

Each thankful little bird uttered soft trills and chirps of joy. To the happy children who had planned the tree their music seemed the sweetest of all the Christmas carols.

VI

CHICKADEE-DEE FINDS A VALENTINE

YES, to-morrow will be Saint Valentine's day, Chickadee-dee," said old Mr. Woodpecker, as he clung to the trunk of the hickory-tree and worked rapidly to get at the grubs from under its bark. "When I was young, I thought sending valentines was the greatest fun in the world."

"What are valentines, Mr. Woodpecker?" asked Chickadee-dee.

"There are different kinds, but I think hearts are best," said the old bird, laughing. "But be careful what little bird you send a valentine to."

Chickadee-dee knew just the one he'd like to to send it to. Of all the little birds in the woods he thought Miss Day-day-day was the nicest. She wore a fluffy gray feather suit like his own. Her little black cap and necktie were very becoming. She was the smartest of all the Chickadees.

Once she had come where Chickadee-dee was pecking at a frozen apple. He had at once flown away, leaving the treat for her. She had thanked him very prettily, uttering her little winter call of "day-day-day."

Yes, Chickadee-dee wanted to send her a valentine. "I'll look about and see if I can find one," he thought. So he went hopping and flying among the trees, poking his little black bill into the crevices of the bark; but no valentine could he find.

He could not go to the store and buy one, because no bird in the Orchard kept a valentine store. All day long he searched vainly for something that would do to give Miss Day-day-day.

Saint Valentine's day dawned bright and clear. "Found a valentine for your sweetheart, Chickadee-dee?" asked old Mr. Woodpecker, as he flew through the Orchard.

"Not yet," owned Chickadee-dee. He asked every bird he met where he could find a valentine, but no one knew. Still he did not give up the search.

At last he flew over to the big white house,

where on a little shelf outside the window he often found something good to eat. Yes, here was a nice piece of suet, and what was that beside it?

"I guess I've found it," cried Chickadee-dee. There back of the suet lay a pretty seed, a white sunflower seed with black stripes on it. It was the shape of a little heart.

Chickadee-dee knew it was good and sweet. How he wanted to eat it himself! But what could be nicer for a valentine? Chickadee-dee looked around and there near by in the lilac bush he spied little Miss Day-day-day.

Chickadee-dee seized the seed in his bill and flew toward her. As he passed the bush he dropped the seed at her feet.

Miss Day-day-day cocked her head and looked at it. Then she fluttered down, picked it up and returned to her perch. Carefully she shelled out the seed and ate the sweet white meat, every grain. Then she uttered a few soft notes of thanks.

Chickadee-dee hopped about in joy. "She liked her valentine!" he said to himself. "She must have liked it for she's eaten it all up!"

VII

MRS. BLUEBIRD CAN'T DECIDE

THE ice was still bordering the edges of the Creek, the wind was bleak and cold when a traveler reached the Beautiful Meadow.

His wings were a little weary, for he had come a long way; but he did not stop to rest. Straight to the old oak-tree he flew, and uttered a sweet warble of greeting.

At the sound Mrs. Nuthatch flew out of her house. "Oh, Mr. Bluebird, is it really you? Back from the South at last?" she cried. "I am so glad to see you. We've all been watching for you. And is it true that Spring is coming?"

Mr. Bluebird's beautiful blue wings fluttered with joy, his breast shone cinnamon-red in the sun. "Yes, tru-al-ly, tru-al-ly," he sang, "Spring is almost here."

"I am so glad!" cried Mrs. Nuthatch. She

knew that Mr. Bluebird was right, for he was always the first to bring the news of Spring's return. "And is Mrs. Bluebird well?"

"Yes, and she will be here soon. I always come first, you know. Now I'll look around the Meadow a little."

When Mrs. Bluebird arrived, a little later, he was filled with joy. He warbled constantly. He wanted to show her everything at once.

He could hardly wait for Mrs. Nuthatch to tell her the news. But of course Mrs. Nuthatch had to tell how wicked Mr. Shrike would have caught Chickadee-dee if it had not been for the Perkins Cat, how cold the winter was, and all about the Christmas tree, and how bad her rheumatism had been. My, how fast she did talk!

"Come, come!" cried Mr. Bluebird at last. "Come, Mrs. Bluebird, you really must rest a while."

It was later in the season that Mr. Bluebird made his wonderful discovery. Fast as his beautiful blue wings could carry him, he flew to his little mate.

"Oh, dearest," he warbled, "I've found just the nicest place! Come and see if you don't think it would make a lovely little home." Swiftly he flew to the Orchard, Mrs. Bluebird following him.

"Now here is a brand-new house," he said, as he lighted on a hollow limb of an apple-tree, which had a round hole in it. "Mr. Hairy Woodpecker made it last fall and it's for rent. What do you think of it, dear?"

Mrs. Bluebird was delighted. She did love to look at new houses. She hopped up and poked her head in at the little round door. She hopped in and looked about. Then she turned around, and hopped out again.

"Yes, it is a nice house, very nice," she said, "and it has a fine view of the Creek. But let's look at some others."

"Well then, see what you think of this one," said Mr. Bluebird, and led the way to an old hollow stump in the corner of the Beautiful Meadow. "Now don't you think this would be pretty comfortable?"

Mrs. Bluebird poked her head in at the door.

She hopped in and looked about. Then she turned around, and hopped out again. "Oh no, it won't do at all. It is very much out of repair," she decided.

"Just as you say, dear," agreed Mr. Bluebird. He knew she was a very particular person, and he was proud of it. "Come, I'll show you another." So eager were the pair that they did not notice a little brown speckled bird, who was flitting about house hunting, too.

On the long fence at the edge of the Meadow there was a post with a nice round hole in it. "Take a look at this," urged Mr. Bluebird.

Mrs. Bluebird poked her head in at the door. She hopped in and looked about. Then she turned around, and suddenly hopped out again. "What was that note I heard?" she asked.

"Why, that was—that was——"

The sound came again. "I thought so," said Mrs. Bluebird. "That is Mrs. English Sparrow's sharp voice. We can't live here. I can't have her for a neighbor; she is so quarrelsome."

"She isn't going to live here. No English Sparrows live in the Beautiful Meadow," Mr.

Bluebird told her. But Mrs. Bluebird was flying swiftly away.

Poor Mr. Bluebird followed in great trouble. Where could he find a home to suit her? Out along the village street she flew, then into the garden of the big white house.

"Will you just look at this, Mr. Bluebird," she cried, as she lighted on a pear-tree. "Here seems to be a very different kind of house."

It did look inviting, the little box that some one had fastened to the tree, about twelve feet from the ground.

Mrs. Bluebird looked in at the door. She hopped in and looked about. Then she turned around, and hopped out again.

"It's a very fine place," she said. "See, the door faces the south. There are no branches beneath for cats to climb up on. Some person who knows what birds like put up this house."

"Let's take it, dear," urged Mr. Bluebird. "We can more than pay the rent by catching the insects about here this summer."

"Let's not decide to-night. We'll sleep on it, and see how it looks in the morning," said Mrs.

Bluebird, who just loved to look at new houses.

But when she woke next morning Mrs. Bluebird thought at once of that nice new house in the pear-tree. She woke Mr. Bluebird. "Oh, let's go right over and take that lovely house!"

"Yes, dear, we will," agreed Mr. Bluebird.

They stopped only a few minutes for breakfast, then off they flew to the pear-tree.

Mrs. Bluebird hopped to the little new house. "We'll take it," she said, and poked her head in at the door. The next second she pulled it back very quickly, for out of the door rushed an angry little brown speckled bird, Mrs. Jenny Wren, scolding and chattering at a fearful rate. "Take my house, will you? I guess not! I moved in at sunrise!" she screamed, and flew at Mrs. Bluebird and chased her into the plum-tree.

Mr. Bluebird could not help laughing. Jenny Wren's little tail stuck straight up. She hopped about and scolded so loudly that Mrs. Bluebird could not make her understand that they were only looking at the house and not trying to drive her out.

At last Mr. Bluebird flew to them. "Come,

"'Take My House, Will You? I Guess not!'"

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Mrs. Bluebird, come away and then maybe Mrs. Wren will calm down."

Mrs. Bluebird was glad to leave. "I saw another nice box house in the mulberry-tree," Mr. Bluebird told her. "It is just as good as this one. Don't you want to take a look at it?"

"No," said Mrs. Bluebird, "but if it's empty we'll move right in. I've looked all I want to."

VIII

CHICKADEE-DEE HELPS SAVE THE DAY

AS the spring came on the wildest excitement reigned among the inhabitants along the Creek. In fact the place was in such a state of terror as had not been known for years.

Citizen Birds flew armed through the streets. Policemen were unable to assure them any degree of safety. Mother birds hardly dared to sleep at night. And every tiny bird child had been warned to lie low in his nest and to utter no loud cry.

The wicked band of robber Squirrels, who camped on the hill, was the cause of all the terror. So sly and treacherous were they that often some bird returning to her home, after the briefest absence, would find her loved eggs broken or gone. No trace of the thief would be visible, save, perhaps, a whisk of a bushy red tail disappearing through the branches.

Bolder and bolder grew the villains. At last the wicked Squirrels, banding together, swept down from the hill destroying bird homes, committing dreadful crimes, and actually carrying off to their dens helpless bird children.

Then came the demand from every citizen along the Creek, "Call out the militia!" From tree to tree rang the cry, "To arms! To arms!"

From his home close to the Creek hurried Captain Red-Winged Blackbird, the soldier bird, who wore proudly on his shoulders the gorgeous scarlet and buff epaulets. Many of his kind followed him. Golden-winged Woodpeckers, large Robins, and Meadowlarks that bore dark shields on their breasts, made up the greater part of the company. Bravely they flew away against the enemy, amidst the cheers of the onlookers.

"Oh, mother," cried Chickadee-dee, hopping about in his excitement, as he watched the troops from his house, "Oh, mother, I must go, too!"

"What an idea!" cried his mother, who did not realize what a big bird Chickadee-dee had grown to be.

"Oh, mother! Anyhow, I'll have to go right over and see if old Mr. Woodpecker has gone!" And off he started before his mother could stop him.

When he reached the Orchard, Chickadee-dee was much surprised to find old Mr. Woodpecker working away on one of his houses, calm as a clock.

"Oh, aren't you going to the war, Mr. Woodpecker?" he cried.

"Going to war, an old fellow like me? Guess not, Chickadee-dee. Don't you worry, our soldier birds will take care of those furry red rascals all right. Why, when I was a youngster just one company of us marched against a band of them—I went along as drummer boy, and—Hullo, what's that!" Old Mr. Woodpecker stopped short, for from across the Creek came a dreadful din.

"They've met the enemy!" he cried, and flew to the top of the apple-tree, Chickadee-dee close after him.

"Yes, see! Captain Blackbird, he's a bright fellow, has led his company to the very foot of

the hill. That's right! That's right! Press the fight right into the enemy's camp!" cried old Mr. Woodpecker in great excitement. "Aha! Taken them by surprise, hasn't he? Aren't the Squirrels falling back, Chickadee-dee?"

"Yes, yes, they're falling back," cried Chickadee-dee, gazing toward the distant battlefield.

It was true. Caught unprepared, the Red Squirrels at first slowly retreated before the bold advance of the Birds. But soon they rallied their forces, and took up a strong position in the beech-trees.

Then, indeed, did old Mr. Woodpecker's heart grow anxious, as he watched the vain efforts of Captain Blackbird to rout the enemy from their stronghold. Chickadee-dee fairly danced in his excitement.

The din of the distant battle grew louder as suddenly a second band of Red Coats appeared. Encouraged by this the Robber Squirrels advanced. And, slowly yielding, Captain Blackbird's troops gave way inch by inch before the superior number.

"They're retreating! Our soldiers are re-

treating!" cried Chickadee-dee. "What shall we do? Oh, come, Mr. Woodpecker, let's go to the rescue!"

"They need help. They need it," owned Mr. Woodpecker, about as excited himself. "But what could you do, a little bird like you?"

"Oh, I can play my fife. I'll whistle on my little fife, and you can drum, Mr. Woodpecker. You know you can drum. Come on! Come on!"

"Yes, yes, I'll drum for them! Come on!" shouted old Mr. Woodpecker, his warlike spirit awaking. "Go by the way of the dogwood bushes, creep up on their flank. Come, Hairy," he called to his cousin, Hairy Woodpecker, who was near, "come on and drum, too."

Away went the three, flying swiftly, following up the Creek, but keeping well out of sight of the enemy.

Cautiously they made their way, sheltered by the thick dogwood bushes, round to one side of the hill. And cautiously they crept up on the enemy's flank.

"Come on, comrades," commanded Mr.

Woodpecker, making for a dead limb in the top of a beech-tree. "Now, all together!"

Then rang out over the battlefield the cheering roll of drums, as old Mr. Woodpecker and his cousin beat on the dead limb, with might and main, their rolling tattoo. And gallantly, with all his heart, did Chickadee-dee play his shrill little fife.

At the sound of the martial music the Red Squirrels, thinking large reinforcements were coming to the aid of the Birds, hesitated in their advance.

Captain Blackbird, taking heart at the cheering sound, rallied his forces and with fierce courage charged the confused enemy.

Then indeed did the Robber Squirrels fall back in disorder, while the drums rang out and the little fife sounded shrilly. Then indeed did Captain Blackbird drive the Squirrels out of the beech-trees and pursue them on up the hill. And then did he actually send them in wild retreat down into the valley, from which the thoroughly frightened thieves dared not venture again that season.

"Old Mr. Woodpecker and His Cousin Beat Their Rolling Tattoo on the Dead Limb. And Gallantly did Chickadee-dee Play His Shrill Fife"

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Glad were the hearts of the victorious soldier birds as they flew homeward. And proud was old Mr. Woodpecker as he fell in line. But proudest of all was Chickadee-dee who, although he was only a little fellow, had helped to save the day.

IX

MRS. SONG SPARROW AND MRS. ROBIN GO TO A CONCERT

"OF course you are planning to attend the concert this evening," said Mrs. Song Sparrow to her friend, Mrs. Robin, who was calling on her one afternoon.

"The concert? Why, I haven't heard about it. I've been so busy settling my new house. And you know I haven't cared to go about much since that terrible Perkins Cat sprang at me, and gave me such a fright."

"Yes, I know," sympathized Mrs. Song Sparrow. "I don't wonder you're nervous; but I fear you're shutting yourself in too closely. Do go with me, the change will do you good."

"I believe I will. What singer is to appear?"

"Why, that is the mystery," explained Mrs. Song Sparrow. "No one knows; but the management has promised a rare treat. I have an

idea it may be some foreign singer, possibly some one who has come from the South."

The concerts, which were very popular that spring, were generally given by home talent. But once in a while some outside artist would be introduced, then every seat in the entire opera house would be taken.

That evening, about sunset, if any one had been watching carefully, a very distinguished-looking bird, smartly dressed in a dark slate-colored suit and a black cap, might have been seen passing quietly from bush to bush. But so silently did he go that no one knew when the performer of the evening reached the opera house.

A little later Mrs. Robin joined her friend, and the two, looking very nice in their new spring suits, started out. Mrs. Song Sparrow was dressed in a rich shade of reddish brown. Her gown was not so showy as her companion's, but she wore a beautiful dark jewel on her striped vest.

Mrs. Robin was sure the red front of her dark gown was very becoming. She did look nice,

and she knew it; although she realized she was a little too stout to be exactly stylish. The fact was she could not resist eating a great many of the nice fresh angleworms that were so plentiful in the markets since the spring rains.

"Oh, let's not go by the way of the Perkins' yard," she begged her friend, "that dreadful cat may be around."

"No, dear, we'll go through the Moodys' garden," agreed Mrs. Song Sparrow.

That did seem a safe plan, but as they were passing through, a harmless white kitten ran out and began to chase its tail, which caused Mrs. Robin to chirp in terror. "Oh, hurry!" she cried, and the two flew as fast as possible, and reached the opera house quite out of breath.

Their seats, in the front of the big elm-tree, proved very satisfactory. They enjoyed watching the audience assemble. Nearly every bird at all prominent in society was present. And if several did spring from their seats to snap at some flying moth or insect, why, that was not thought bad manners at all.

"When do you suppose this affair will begin?

I feel so curious," said Mrs. Robin, moving restlessly about. "I hear that Miss Vesper Sparrow gave a charming recital last week."

Just then the frogs began to play a soft overture, and a hush fell on all. From behind the leafy curtain of the low, green bush that formed the stage a bird's pure, liquid notes were heard. Very softly at first, then gradually growing louder, clear and high he sang a joyful melody.

"Why, can that be Mr. Robin?" whispered Mrs. Robin, feeling very proud. "I think I recognize some of his tones."

Then the notes of the singer began to ring like silver bells calling, calling, through the stillness. "It sounds like Mr. Thrush to me," murmured Mrs. Song Sparrow.

Again the song changed, wonderful trills and chirps followed a rollicking, joyous lay that expressed all the merriment of spring. Mrs. Brown Thrasher leaned forward in her seat. "That is my cousin, Mr. Mockingbird, from the South, I have no doubt," and she tossed her head.

And still the song went on, a wonderful med-

ley, ringing through the leafy hall. Then the singer paused an instant and the audience, the finest music critics in the world, was just breaking into applause, when suddenly, seemingly in their very midst, sounded the frightful squall of a cat.

Every bird in the hall sprang into the air.

Mrs. Robin shrieked and wildly grasped Mrs. Song Sparrow's wing.

Again came the awful yowl, as though the wicked enemy were right among them.

Bird ushers flew up and down the aisles, crying, "Keep your seats! There's no danger! Be calm!"

"I'm going to faint!" gasped Mrs. Robin.

"You mustn't. You're so stout I can't carry you out," cried Mrs. Song Sparrow, forgetting to be polite.

In another second there would have been a mad rush, a frightful panic in the hall, if the stage manager had not instantly pulled back the curtain and revealed the singer—the distinguished-looking person in the slate-colored suit, Mr. Catbird.

"Oh, it's Mr. Catbird! It's only Mr. Catbird!" cried Mrs. Song Sparrow to her friend.

Mrs. Robin opened her eyes. "If I'd had any idea this was a ventriloquist show I wouldn't have come," she said.

"Oh, but you know Mr. Catbird is such a mimic. Didn't he sound exactly like the Perkins cat?" laughed Mrs. Song Sparrow. "He is always playing jokes. But hasn't he a wonderful voice? It's only in the spring he sings his finest songs. It's a rare treat to hear him!"

"A treat? The mischievous fellow!" said Mrs. Robin, whose nerves were badly shaken.

The rest of the audience were not so severe. They quickly decided to forgive Mr. Catbird for his trick, and broke into wild applause. Mr. Catbird bowed and bowed. At last he responded with such a beautiful encore that the music lovers made him sing thrice more before they were satisfied.

X

LITTLE SAMMY SONG SPARROW

IT had rained hard all night and still it was pouring when Mrs. Song Sparrow arose. First, from the garden fence, she uttered a cheery little greeting to all the world, as was her custom. Then she set about getting breakfast for her only child. But, oh, how fussy her little Sammy was!

He chased his mother about, fluttering his wings and crying like a much spoiled little bird. Poor Mrs. Song Sparrow had hardly time to snatch a mouthful herself.

There were few insects about and Sammy pouted naughtily when his mother gave him only seeds.

"I don't like these old seeds," he fussed. "I want a nice fat caterpillar!"

"Then look by that plantain leaf," urged his mother, "perhaps one is there."

"There's a puddle by the leaf. I can't reach. I don't like this old rain anyhow!"

"I should say you hopped off the wrong side of the twig this morning, Sammy," said Mrs. Song Sparrow reprovingly.

In spite of the rebuke Sammy continued to complain. He fussed because his feathers were damp and heavy, he grumbled because he could not play in the Meadow, but most of all he fussed because it still kept on raining.

At last the neighbors noticed it, and Mrs. Song Sparrow overheard Mrs. Yellowbird say to Mrs. Robin, "What a discontented child! That little Sammy Song Sparrow must have a bad disposition."

Mrs. Song Sparrow did not stop to hear more. A discontented child in the cheerful Song Sparrow family, who ever heard of such a thing!

"Sammy Song Sparrow," she said, "fly right up on that tree." Sammy obeyed and his mother lighted near by. "Listen, and hear what it is your father is singing over there!"

Just then Mr. Song Sparrow, who was perched on a fence not far away, threw back his

head and sang in his clear, musical voice, "Sweet-sweet-sweet-oh, sweet-sweet-sweet-sweet-sweet!"

"Now, Sammy, you must try to sing it just the way he does," instructed Mrs. Song Sparrow. "Sing it, my dear, then look about and see what you can see that is sweet and pretty. Then sing it again. Keep on till I tell you to stop."

Little Sammy threw back his head, showing the dark breastpin on his striped vest, and gave a very feeble imitation of his father's song.

"That's right," said his mother. "Do just as I told you. I am going across the Meadow, but I'll be back soon," and away she flew, leaving Sammy trying his best to sing.

When his mother returned the little bird was still singing. "What have you seen since I've been gone?" questioned Mrs. Song Sparrow.

"Oh, mother," chirped Sammy, "how pretty and shiny the lilac leaves look!"

"Yes, the rain has washed them all clean. If it wasn't for the rain there would be no new leaves and no flowers in the spring."

"No flowers!" cried Sammy.

"No, and then no seeds, and no insects about for little Song Sparrow children."

"Why!" chirped Sammy, "then the rain is good, isn't it? And see, the pretty pink roses by the Creek are washed all clean, too. And Bobbie Robin and Speckles are getting clean, fresh strawberries for luncheon."

"Yes, the rain is over now; you may get a wild strawberry, too."

"Oh, good!" cried little Sammy Song Sparrow, and he threw back his head and sang, oh, so clearly, "Sweet-sweet-sweet-oh, sweet-sweet-sweet-sweet-sweet!"

Mrs. Yellowbird heard him and said to Mrs. Robin, "Just hear that dear bird! He is going to make as fine a singer as his father. He is all right now that he has learned to sing instead of fuss."

XI

BOBBIE ROBIN'S MISTAKE

WHEN Bobbie Robin and his sister Speckles ran away one afternoon, they thought that no one saw them. But their mother, sitting high up in a pine-tree, could tell very well the way they went.

They had been left to practise their music lessons, and who ever knew a child that liked to practise? Very quietly, for young robins, they slipped through the bushes and flew over to the Meadow where the iris grew.

"Let's get up here on the post and see what's going on," said Bobbie.

"No," decided Speckles, "I'd rather stay down on the ground. I hear a worm over there and I think it is a big one."

"Well, stay if you want to," said Bobbie, "but I'm going to look." And up he flew on the post and looked about him.

The Meadow was a very beautiful place. A broad Creek, an arm of the river that flowed down to the distant sea, ran through the midst of it. Great elm-trees grew along its banks. In the corner, where the Robin children were, was a dense tangle of bushes that nearly covered an old, half-broken fence.

It did not take Bobbie Robin long to find out that he and his sister were not the only birds in the Meadow.

Clinging to the fence, not very far away, was a little bird boy dressed in a strikingly handsome suit. The back of his coat was brown, mottled with black. On the back of his neck was a brilliant scarlet collar. His black tail was lined with yellow. And when he moved his wings Bobbie could see that they, too, had the same bright lining, yellow as gold.

"Oh, Speckles, come up here!" he urged. "Here's a fellow all fixed up in a party suit."

Speckles hastily scrambled up on the post beside her brother to see the sight. "I guess that must be young Woodpecker that Mother said lives in a hole high up in the old pear-tree. My,

Bobbie, doesn't he look handsome!" she exclaimed admiringly.

"Pooh!" cried Bobbie Robin scornfully, "he's a backwoodsman anyhow! He's only a Woodpecker, sis, if he is all fixed up. His folks have been in the lumber business for years."

"It must pay them well," said Speckles. "Guess they're dreadfully wealthy birds. Mother says they are called the Golden-wings."

The young Woodpecker was so busy getting ants from the fence where he clung, that at first he did not notice the Robin children. At last he caught sight of them and bowed very politely, as is the manner of Woodpeckers the world over. But because he was trying to keep his balance, as he bowed he fluttered out his wings and showed their golden lining.

"Doesn't he think he's a swell!" said Bobbie unkindly. "Guess he wants to show off. He's making fun of us 'cause he's dressed up and we aren't."

"Oh, hush, Bobbie!" murmured Speckles, greatly taken up with the stranger's fine clothes, as birds often are. "He'll hear you. Don't

you wish you had a lovely red collar like his! He's really quite grown up, isn't he?"

Now Bobbie Robin had been teasing only that morning for a red waistcoat like his father's. But his parents had decided that he must wear his speckled tire a while longer. "Young Robins never dress like their fathers at first," he was told. "Nearly all small birds have to wait a season before they put on their grown-up suits." He felt rather sulky about it, for he was indeed fully as large as his parents.

He did not at all like to hear his sister praising the stranger. He felt very cross. He hopped about on the post.

"Pooh! Speckles," he scorned, "he isn't grown up. He's got on a bib! See, he's wearing a bib like any baby!" If Bobbie had only been older, and seen more of the world, he never would have made such a funny mistake.

Speckles gazed in wonder. "Why—ee—!" she cried. It was true that with his gay party clothes young Golden-wing wore a large black crescent on his breast.

"Hi!" called Bobbie, shouting at the stranger, "forgot to take off your bib, didn't you?"

Golden-wing in his surprise at the rude bird fluttered his wings once more. And Bobbie Robin thought he was trying to show off again.

"Oh, 'fore I'd wear a bib! Oh, 'fore I'd wear a bib!" he called, laughing loudly.

Golden-wing's father, who was in a tree near by, heard the noise and thinking there was trouble came at once to see about it.

When Bobbie saw him on the fence beside his child, he was very much frightened. Mr. Golden-wing looked very hard at the young Robin. "So he thinks you've got on a bib, does he?" he asked his son. "He takes our beautiful black necklaces, that have been in the family for ages, for bibs! Well, well, that's a good joke! I must tell your mother," and he laughed and laughed the way Woodpeckers do.

Poor Bobbie Robin! When he dared to look at Mr. Golden-wing, he saw that he, too, wore proudly a handsome black crescent on his breast. In fact, young Golden-wing was dressed in a suit exactly like his father's and had been ever

since the day he came out of the nursery-nest. He was one of the few small birds that did not have to wait for their grown-up suits.

Oh, how green and ashamed Bobbie Robin felt to think he had not known what a necklace was when he saw one. He jumped down onto the ground.

"Never mind, son," he heard Mr. Golden-wing say, "that Robin is very young yet, and has much to learn. He'll be wiser when he gets off his speckled tire and into his red waistcoat like his father's. Remember, son, only ignorant or ill-mannered people ever criticize the dress of others."

Bobbie did not wait to hear more. He hurried home as fast as he could go, and Speckles followed him.

XII

PETER, COPY-CATBIRD

MRS. CATBIRD often said that little Peter Catbird was the hardest of all her children to manage, and she did not know what in the world to do with him.

Peter seldom meant to be naughty, but he was always flying about seeing what the other birds were doing. His mother wanted him to stay under cover in the thicket.

"What is Peter Catbird up to now?" asked Speckles of her brother, Bobbie Robin, one bright morning.

"Goodness only knows! Let's watch him," advised Bobbie.

Little Peter looked very funny. There he sat on a dead branch of a pear-tree, dressed in his dark gray suit and little black cap, his head poked out, gazing earnestly.

Suddenly he launched himself into the air,

made an awkward turn, and came back to the branch. Again and again he tried it. What it meant Bobbie Robin could not tell. But Mrs. Catbird knew.

Over by the wall she could see Mrs. Flycatcher getting her breakfast. Perched on a dead branch Mrs. Flycatcher watched sharply till some insect passed. Then she darted out, snapped it up and was back on her branch in a twinkling.

"Peter, Peter, Peter," called Mrs. Catbird, "come here. What do you think you are doing, copying the way Mrs. Flycatcher gets her breakfast? For shame! Catbirds should get their food in the underbrush. You must stay under cover or something will get you."

"Peter is a Copycat! Oh, Peter is a Copy-Catbird!" taunted Bobbie Robin from the blueberry bush.

Little Peter, however, had no thoughts of staying in the underbrush. The very next day Bobbie saw him clinging to a branch of an apple-tree, and pecking at it vigorously with his little black bill.

In the next tree old Mr. Woodpecker was drilling rapidly into a branch with his chisel-like beak, and devouring the grubs he found under the bark.

"Well, well, what do you think you are doing, Peter?" he asked, when he saw the naughty bird. "That is no way for a little Catbird to act. Woodpeckers have bills made to drill into tree-trunks; Catbirds have not. They should get their food in the thicket."

"Peter is a Copycat! Oh, Peter is a Copy-Catbird!" trilled Bobbie Robin from the cherry-tree.

The next feat that Peter attempted was to fly through the air like Mr. Swallow. Mrs. Catbird saw him vainly trying to make long, sweeping curves, and to snatch a darting insect in his flight. Quickly she called him down to the thicket.

"Peter Catbird," she reproved, "Mr. Swallow has broad wings, so he can sail through the air and catch mosquitoes for breakfast. But you have not. Just hear what Bobbie Robin is say-

ing about you! You must stay in the underbrush or something will get you."

But, would you believe it, in less than an hour naughty Peter, perched on a dead birch branch overhanging the Creek, was watching the water just as Mr. Kingfisher, farther up stream, was doing.

Soon Mr. Kingfisher caught sight of a passing fish and, splash, he dived in after it. The next second Peter shot from his branch, splash, into the water.

At the sound Grandfather Turtle, who was dozing in the mud, woke, stretched out his ugly neck and snapped angrily at poor Peter. He almost snapped his little head off.

Half scared to death, Peter managed to flop to the shore. His mother met him. Little Peter, dripping and miserable, was very glad to follow her into the thicket.

"Mr. Kingfisher wears an oil waterproof over his feathers," she told Peter, "so he can get his dinner from the Creek. You would not like fish if you could catch it. Catbirds should find

their food in the thicket. Will you remember now, and stay with me?"

Little Peter promised to be good. Grandfather Turtle had scared him so badly that he was very glad to remain safely in the underbrush with his mother, and to stop being a Copy-Catbird.

XIII

MRS. YELLOWBIRD TRIES TO FOLLOW THE FASHIONS

LITTLE Mrs. Yellowbird had recently moved to Willow Road, and she was feeling rather lonesome. Her neighbors had intended to call on her at once, but had neglected to do so. They were all very much occupied with settling their own houses; spring is such a busy time. So, one afternoon, Mrs. Yellowbird was greatly pleased to receive a visit from Mrs. Cowbird.

Mrs. Cowbird was not very well dressed herself, her gown being rather a dingy and shabby gray, but she talked a great deal about her husband's fine clothes, and evidently was very proud of his glossy black suit and chocolate-colored hood.

Little Mrs. Yellowbird felt very glad that she had recently plumed and dressed her own pretty feathers and was looking her best.

"You have a pleasant little home begun here," said Mrs. Cowbird as she looked about.

"Yes, I like it. Where do you live?" inquired Mrs. Yellowbird.

"Oh, we travel about a good deal. I myself should not care to settle down in one place," said Mrs. Cowbird. "You'll find it rather quiet here, I fear."

"Why, yes, perhaps I shall," owned Mrs. Yellowbird, who had never been troubled by her quiet life before. "But when my nest is finished and I have the baby birds, I'll be busy enough caring for them."

"Why, my dear," exclaimed Mrs. Cowbird in a surprised and patronizing manner, "do you really intend to take care of your children yourself? You have no nurse maid?"

Little Mrs. Yellowbird was quite embarrassed; she had never kept a nurse maid in her life. "But I like to take care of babies," she murmured.

"Oh, yes, they are cunning; but they confine one so. You'll have no time to attend to your club and general outside interests. Take my ad-

vice, my dear, and get some one to relieve you of the care. I always have some one myself. It's the thing to do," urged Mrs. Cowbird as she took her leave.

Gentle Mrs. Yellowbird was much troubled. She could not bear the thought of leaving her dear children with a stranger. She feared they might be neglected and not warmly tucked into their nests at night. And what was more, she feared if she left them with some careless maid they might learn to imitate her manner of singing, and their sweet voices might be ruined for life.

Little Mrs. Yellowbird was young, however, and she was much impressed by Mrs. Cowbird's airs. If to keep a nurse maid was the thing to do, here in the Creek community, then she must have one, she decided.

The very next morning she went over to Mrs. Chipping Sparrow's—Mrs. Sparrow had called on her the week before—to inquire where she could find a nurse maid.

Mrs. Chipping Sparrow was sorry that she could not give her any information. She did

not say anything about keeping a maid herself, but she looked rather strange when Mrs. Yellowbird mentioned that Mrs. Cowbird always kept one.

When Mrs. Yellowbird asked Mrs. Robin's aid in her search, Mrs. Robin very frankly said she had never kept a nurse maid in her life. Mr. Robin often stayed with the children when she wished to be away from home. And she also had an odd expression when told about Mrs. Cowbird's habit.

It was after Mrs. Yellowbird had grown rather discouraged with her search, and had put an advertisement for a maid in the paper, that she heard, one morning, a great commotion in Mrs. Chipping Sparrow's house. Thinking there was trouble, she hastened over.

She found Mrs. Chipping Sparrow flying about in great distress. "Will you look at this!" she cried. "I had been away a little while, and as I came back I noticed Mrs. Cowbird hastening down the road. And now just see here!"

Mrs. Yellowbird looked, and there in Mrs.

"There Was a Great Commotion in Mrs. Chipping Sparrow's House"

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Sparrow's nest, crowded in among her own pretty blue eggs, was a larger speckled one.

"Why, what does this mean?" asked little Mrs. Yellowbird most innocently.

"It means," cried Mrs. Sparrow in high indignation, "that that horrid Mrs. Cowbird has left an egg here for me to look after."

"Mrs. Cowbird!" cried little Mrs. Yellowbird. "Why, where is her own nest?"

"Oh, she hasn't any nest at all. She never troubles to make one. She makes use of her neighbors'. It's her way." Mrs. Sparrow's wings fluttered in her excitement. "She just imposes her children on any one she can, and never brings up one herself. Mrs. Song Sparrow had one to take care of last year, and nearly wore herself out feeding it. And now I've got this one!"

Mrs. Yellowbird could hardly believe her ears. "And just think," she said, "she told me she would not care to settle down. She said she always kept a nurse maid, and advised me to get one. I felt dreadfully out of fashion because I'd never had one."

At little Mrs. Yellowbird's outburst Mrs. Sparrow forgot her anger and began to laugh. "Well, well, she evidently regards her neighbors as nurse maids. It is well that we people of the Creek don't all try to follow Mrs. Cowbird's fashions. We find it a pleasure to take care of our babies ourselves, and I suppose I'll have to do what I can for hers. It is wise to be careful whose fashions we follow, my dear."

Little Mrs. Yellowbird began to sing for joy when she heard Mrs. Sparrow's friendly advice, and swiftly she flew to have her advertisement taken out of the paper.

XIV

MRS. YELLOWBIRD SETS A NEW FASHION

A SHORT time before Mrs. Cowbird called on her, Mrs. Yellowbird had started to work on her nest. Such a charming little home as it was! In the first place the situation was delightful. Often Mrs. Yellowbird had nested in some shrub or bush, but this season she chose the willow that grew near the spring.

"Now I want to have this house exactly to my mind," she told Mr. Yellowbird, and he agreed that it should be.

Bright and early one morning she started out to look for building material. It was along the Cape road that she spied a few straws. She seized them with joy and carried them back to place in a fork of the willow for a foundation for the nest.

Then from the young fern fronds, that were

springing up along the Creek, she gathered the soft, white down. As she was placing it with the straws, Mr. Yellowbird flew down in great excitement.

"Come right over to the Orchard," he urged. "I've found some splendid material there, you must have it." Away the two flew swiftly, looking much like streaks of sunshine in their pretty yellow suits.

"Now what do you think of that?" asked Mr. Yellowbird, proudly exhibiting the tent caterpillar's web he had discovered. "Doesn't that silk look about right?"

"Oh, lovely!" cried little Mrs. Yellowbird, greatly delighted. "Just the very thing!"

"Well, rest yourself a bit, dear. You'll find some nice little worms under that leaf," said Mr. Yellowbird.

Mrs. Yellowbird did stop just long enough to snatch a mouthful, and to hear her husband warble his sweet "we-chee, we-chee, wee-oo." Then she filled her bill with the silky web and hastened back to the willow.

The silk proved the nicest stuff imaginable for

firmly binding together the down and straws and making them fast to the willow. Such a busy day as the little bird passed, collecting the fern cotton, carrying silk and shaping the pretty cup-like nest. When night came she had it well under way.

Oh, how she loved that pretty nest! "Isn't it the dearest nest, we-chee, we-chee, wee-oo! Isn't it the sweetest nest you ever saw?" she sang in joy. "Now what shall I line it with?" she asked Mr. Yellowbird. "I want something very, very nice."

Before the right lining was found Mrs. Cowbird had called on Mrs. Yellowbird and urged her to engage a nurse maid. That idea caused the little lady much trouble and anxiety. But when she found how Mrs. Cowbird had imposed on Mrs. Chipping Sparrow, Mrs. Yellowbird concluded that the opinion of such a bird was not worth caring about. So she went happily on with her work.

She fussed a good deal about that nest lining. No, she did not want grass, she told Mr. Yellowbird, it was too common. Rootlets were too

coarse. "Just let me go over on the Cape road again. I'll find something." And off she went, with Mr. Yellowbird not far behind.

Sure enough, down on the Cape road she spied a number of long, black horsehairs. Those, she decided, were just what she wanted. Swiftly she made her way home bearing her precious find.

Quickly, but cautiously, she entered the willow and flew to her loved nest. Eagerly she looked at it—then uttered a piercing shriek.

Poor little Mrs. Yellowbird! She could scarcely believe her eyes. There in her beautiful nest, her loved nest, was a big, ugly, speckled egg.

At the sound of her shrill cries Mr. Yellowbird came swiftly. "Look at this, only look at this, Mr. Yellowbird!" she cried. "What shall I do? What shall I do? I know who has been here! That is Mrs. Cowbird's egg. She has left it here in my sweet little nest for me to care for. Oh! Oh! Oh!"

Mr. Yellowbird was greatly concerned. He

had never seen gentle little Mrs. Yellowbird so angry. "And that person advised me to keep a nurse maid," she went on. "Does she think I am going to bring up her ugly child? Oh, I'll show her!"

Mr. Yellowbird tried in vain to quiet his wife. "I won't be imposed on!" she kept saying. "Mrs. Chipping Sparrow may look after one of Mrs. Cowbird's eggs if she wants to, but I'll not."

Then, because she was a clever little bird, Mrs. Yellowbird flew to find more straws. Then she hastened to the Orchard for more caterpillar's silk. Again she went to work on the little nest. So fast and furiously did she work that by nightfall she had built an entirely new floor to her house, right over the hateful egg, shutting it in completely.

Mr. Yellowbird was greatly charmed with his wife's cleverness. "Well, I'm glad you've shown the neighbors how to deal with Mrs. Cowbird," he told her proudly.

When little Mrs. Yellowbird laid her own

pretty eggs on the new floor and hovered them happily, he kept such close watch of the dear little home that Mrs. Cowbird never dared come near again.

XV

TEACHER, TEACHER, TEACHER

SCHOOLMASTER OWL was walking in the woods one evening when suddenly he heard some one calling him.

Mr. Owl was not feeling happy. His pupils had been behaving badly all the week, and this made him really very cross.

Again he heard some one calling loudly, and very fast. "Teacher, *Teacher, Teacher,* TEACHER, TEACHER!" really screaming.

Now Mr. Owl had often told his pupils to address him as "Mr. Owl," and never on any account to call out "Teacher, Teacher," so he at once became very angry. He looked about for a little stick with which to punish the offending pupil.

Before he could find one there walked up to him a little bird, with a spotted breast, who said again, "Teacher, *Teacher, Teacher,* TEACHER, TEACHER!"

Then Schoolmaster Owl saw that the offender was not one of his pupils but Mrs. Ovenbird. "Well, what in the world do you want?" he asked severely, glaring at the little bird out of his big round eyes.

"Oh, Teacher, Teacher, you know everything, don't you?" asked the little bird.

"Well, perhaps not quite everything," said Mr. Owl, feeling rather pleased; "but there are a good many things I do know."

"Oh, Teacher, *Teacher, Teacher,* TEACHER, TEACHER, do tell me something! I'm nearly distracted!"

"If you didn't scream so loudly you wouldn't be," returned Mr. Owl severely. "But what is it you want to know?"

"Oh, I can't make up my mind. I can't make up my mind where to build my nest."

"Why not?" demanded Mr. Owl. He looked more closely at the little bird. She was dressed in an olive-colored coat, and her light vest was spotted and streaked with black. On her head she wore an orange cap bordered with black. She walked along the ground, instead of hop-

"'Oh, Teacher, *Teacher, Teacher,* Teacher, TEACHER, Do Tell Me Something!'"

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ping the way most of the Orchard people did. Mr. Owl thought she was a very, very foolish bird.

But Mrs. Ovenbird was not a foolish bird. She well knew that Mr. Owl was not always kind to little birds, that many feared him and all his tribe. She had even heard stories of his carrying off small birds; but she had also heard that no one was wiser than he. So in her trouble she had overcome her fears and come to him for advice.

"Why not?" demanded Mr. Owl again. "Why can't you make up your mind where to build your nest?"

"Why, because I'm so afraid my enemies will find it," cried Mrs. Ovenbird.

"You might hide it up in the big birch-tree," said Mr. Owl.

"Oh, dear, no. The Crows and Jays and Cats would be sure to find it there. And you know what they do to nests."

"Then build it farther back in the woods. The Perkins Cat seldom goes so far."

"Oh, oh, I'm afraid the Squirrels will come

back to the woods! You know what Squirrels do to nests."

"Oh, the Squirrels! Grandma Chickadee seems to have lived, in spite of the Squirrels, for some years. They won't come back very soon, after the way the Birds whipped them this Spring. But why don't you put your nest 'way out on the tip of an elm-tree branch, then no Squirrel could get it."

Mrs. Ovenbird shook her head. "Lady Baltimore Oriole is the only bird who knows how to hang a nest out on the tip of an elm-tree branch, and fix it so it won't blow down. Besides, black snakes climb trees, and you know what snakes do to nests and little birds."

Schoolmaster Owl thought a little. "I believe you'd better build it on the ground," he said. "There are no minks or muskrats round here to disturb ground nests."

But at that the little bird began to scream again. "Oh, Teacher, *Teacher, Teacher,* TEACHER, TEACHER! Don't you know if I put it on the ground the Boy will find it. And you know what Boys do to nests."

"Pooh, Pooh!" said Schoolmaster Owl. "Very few boys are cruel enough to harm the nest of a little bird who has so many enemies. They sometimes help guard such nests."

"But I don't know about the Boy who comes through the woods on his way to school. He may be cruel. I shouldn't want him to know where my nest was. Where can I hide it? Where can I hide it? He has bright eyes."

Schoolmaster Owl looked very wise. "Yes, boys have bright eyes, but they seldom know how to use them," he said. "Now, don't worry, I'll tell you where to put your nest so no boy will find it."

"Oh, where?"

Schoolmaster Owl blinked one round eye and then the other, then bent his head and whispered something to the little bird.

"Oh, thank you, thank you! That is queer," she said, "but I'll try it." And off she walked, as happy as could be.

A few weeks later, Mr. Owl was walking in the woods again when a little bird ran up to him.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" he asked. "Well, how about the nest?"

"Oh, it's perfectly safe! It's safe as can be!" sang little Mrs. Ovenbird joyfully. "It has a little roof over it, and a door on one side."

"And has the Boy found it, the Boy with the bright eyes?" laughed Schoolmaster Owl.

"Oh my, no! Oh, Mr. Owl, how wise you are!" said Mrs. Ovenbird.

Schoolmaster Owl, much pleased, puffed out his feathers. "And where did you hide your nest?" he asked.

"Why, I put it just where you told me to: on the ground *right out in plain sight.* It's just as you said, boys have bright eyes, but they don't know how to use them. Come and look at the nest."

Mrs. Ovenbird ran up the path; Schoolmaster Owl followed her. And there on the ground, where the dead leaves were thick, was the little nest rounded up. Leaves and grass formed the roof to it, the door was on one side, leaves were lying all about it. Right out in plain sight was

that little nest; but it would have taken very bright eyes indeed to have seen it.

"That's right! That's right!" said Schoolmaster Owl, nodding his head wisely. He did like to appear wise, did Schoolmaster Owl.

But what do you think? He had told little Mrs. Ovenbird to build her nest just where he knew her mother, and her grandmother, and her great-grandmother before her had always built theirs.

XVI

LITTLE LORD BALTIMORE

AS it happened he was an only child. His home was high up in the very tallest elm that grew in the Beautiful Meadow.

Everything in the world had been done for the comfort and safety of this baby. His mother, Lady Baltimore Oriole, had seen to that. Some time before he appeared she had found many long strings that some one had kindly put out for her, in the garden of the big house.

"Aren't they fine! They are just what I want to start my house," she told her husband. Eagerly seizing them, she flew to the elm-tree and joyfully began her work.

From twig to twig she carried the string, hopping in and out among the small branches, over and under them. Once, in her zeal, she turned

a complete somersault. Very securely she wound the string about the twigs, pulling and tugging with great vigor. It was no easy task, but she was an expert needlewoman and weaver, though her only needle was her own sharp bill.

Horsehair, too, she used, and fibers of bark. Then she searched until she found the strong, shiny silk of the milkweed plant. That was beautiful to weave into the deep pocket-like cradle.

As Lady Baltimore Oriole worked, her husband, gorgeous in his orange and black suit, whistled and sang for joy in the tree-tops. "What makes you so particular?" he questioned. "There is no need of fussing so."

Lady Oriole looked at him with scorn. "This cradle cannot be too carefully made," she said. "Here it hangs, 'way out on the tip of this branch. What do you think a storm would do to a carelessly made nest? But, I can tell you, no wind will ever blow down this house, and no rain will ever soak it through."

It was well for the fine fellow that he had such an industrious wife. He himself loved to

"As Lady Baltimore Oriole Worked, Her Husband, Gorgeous in His Orange and Black Suit, Whistled and Sang in the Tree Tops"

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sing, and flash about among the trees, and show off his handsome clothes.

And well he might be proud of them. Did not the great English Lord Baltimore, when he came to this country, admire the orange and black suits of the Oriole family, and were not the birds themselves named after him?

For many days Lady Baltimore's baby, after he came out of his eggshell home, swung in the beautiful silken cradle his mother had made for him. He loved to rock to and fro in the breeze.

His parents searched the Orchard over for his food. They captured many moths and caterpillars that were injuring the fruit-trees. Their baby ate all they brought him and even cried for more. How fast he grew!

Soon he climbed up to the edge of his hammock and gazed about him. Other birds lived in the same tall elm-tree. They wore pretty yellow clothes or soft greens, the shade of the leaves. But the Only Child thought his father's orange and black suit was the most beautiful of all; he wished his own were like it.

"Oh, no," his mother told him, "it is better for

you to wear duller colors, browns and yellows, like mine, until you are older and can fly swiftly. If you dressed as gaily as your father, your enemies would see you too easily."

As he looked down from his high home, the Only Child saw several large birds dressed in somber black, walking about the Beautiful Meadow. "Oh, Mother," he cried, "see how homely they are! I should think any one would be ashamed to be dressed like that."

"Those are the Crow Blackbirds, my dear," his mother told him. "They always wear black."

"And who are those following after the cows? They are dressed in black, too, and have ugly brown on their heads. I wouldn't be seen with them," said the Only Child, tossing his head proudly.

"Those are the Cowbirds, my dear."

"There are some big fellows near the Creek. They are wearing black, too, but they have a little scarlet on their wings. I should think they'd wear all scarlet, it's so much prettier."

"They are the Red-winged Blackbirds, my dear," said his mother.

Although his parents thought he was wonderfully smart, the Only Child was really very backward about flying. Perhaps it was because he had no brothers to encourage him. He would often climb to the edge of the nest and look about, but make no attempt to use his little wings. If his father, Lord Baltimore, had not taken the matter in hand, there is no telling when he would have left his home.

Lord Baltimore searched the Orchard till he found a most tempting moth. This he offered to his son, who from the edge of the nest reached eagerly for it. But the moth was not, as usual, popped into the baby's mouth. With a cry his father flew with it to a lower branch. To lose that beautiful dinner was too much! Greatly startled, the Only Child sprang after it, and the deed was done. He had flown!

How proud his parents were! You would have thought he was the first child in all the Beautiful Meadow that had ever used his wings.

His mother at once gave a party for him; a coming-out party it was, of course. And whom do you suppose she invited with the other guests? Why, the Crow Blackbirds, the Red-winged Blackbirds, and the Cowbirds in their homely suits.

Little Lord Baltimore, the Only Child, was much put out when he saw them. He tossed his head and would have little to say to them.

By and by he overheard Mrs. Robin, who was hidden by a cluster of leaves, say to another guest, "Isn't it too funny for anything—Little Lord Baltimore will scarcely speak to his own cousins!"

After that the Only Child could hardly wait for the guests to leave. He went at once to his mother. "What did Mrs. Robin mean," he questioned, "by calling those meanly-dressed Blackbirds my cousins?"

"Why, my dear," laughed Lady Oriole, "they are your cousins, the Red-wings and the Crow Blackbirds and even the Cowbirds. Black is the family color. The Meadowlarks and Bob-

olinks are cousins, too. You are proud of your father's fine feathers, but always remember that what the Oriole family is really noted for is its ability to weave strong and beautiful nests."

XVII

THE BRAVERY OF MR. THRASHER

MR. BROWN THRASHER and Mr. Catbird were having a singing-match. Mr. Catbird sang from the heart of a thick green bush. But Mr. Thrasher perched on the very top of a high blueberry bush. He threw back his head, gazed up to the sky, and sang and sang and sang.

His bright reddish-brown coat gleamed in the sun almost like burnished brass. His creamy waistcoat was marked with dark spots.

All the Birds in the Meadow thought that Mr. Thrasher was proud of his fine coat. They thought that he was proud of his yellow eyes and his long tail that opened and shut like a fan. They knew he was proud of his splendid voice.

In fact, "as proud as Mr. Thrasher," had come to be a common saying in the Meadow.

Many of the Birds gathered to listen to Mr.

Thrasher and Mr. Catbird's singing-match. Some thought Mr. Thrasher could sing longer than Mr. Catbird. Others were sure Mr. Catbird would win.

How the two did sing! At last Mr. Catbird began to grow a little weary. So he meowed, just like a cat, and tried to scare Mr. Brown Thrasher.

Mr. Thrasher was not so easily scared. "Yes, you do sound just like the Perkins Cat; but I know it's you, Mr. Catbird," he called. "Are you getting tired? My, I could sing all day! Can you do this?" and Mr. Thrasher began to trill and chirp in a very wonderful way.

Then Mr. Catbird started again, stronger than ever. There is no telling how long the pair would have sung, if little Mrs. Yellowbird had not suddenly appeared.

"Mr. Thrasher, Mr. Thrasher," she called, "Mrs. Thrasher wants you to come right home."

Mr. Thrasher stopped in the middle of a trill and dashed away across the Meadow.

Mrs. Thrasher flew to meet him. She was wild with excitement.

"Some one has found our nest!" she cried. "Come, oh, come!"

Mr. Thrasher could hardly believe his ears. How could any one have found that nest which they had so very, very carefully hidden away in a pile of brush?

"Wait, I'll see to this, Mrs. Thrasher," he ordered, as he slipped into a bush to investigate.

Yes, it was true! There was a meddlesome person actually peeping right into that secret nest. It made no difference to the owner that the cunning house and its occupants were only being greatly admired.

With a hiss of rage Mr. Thrasher sprang out of his bush, his yellow eyes agleam. Mrs. Thrasher followed closely, hissing as bravely.

At the angry sound the meddlesome person started, but did not retreat.

Instead, Mr. Thrasher found himself looking into the fierce round eye of a strange, box-like thing.

Bravely he faced it, thrashing his long tail about and hissing again and again. There was a sharp, clicking noise.

Then that meddlesome person actually moved a bit nearer that secret nest, and turned that awful eye upon it.

Mr. Thrasher's heart swelled with rage. He forgot his own fears. That nest must be saved at all costs.

Puffing out his feathers till he looked twice his real size, Mr. Thrasher hurled himself, with an awful hiss, bang, against the meddlesome person's head.

Mrs. Thrasher, equally as brave, dashed at the intruder from the opposite side.

At the fierce and repeated attacks no wonder the meddlesome person was glad to retreat, camera and all, while the brave Thrashers exulted and rejoiced over the safety of their loved home.

Mrs. Yellowbird, and Mr. Robin, who had hurried to offer help, said that Mr. Thrasher's attack was the bravest act they had ever witnessed. They told all the Birds in the Meadow about it.

To their surprise, Mr. Thrasher did not brag about it, or appear at all proud.

"Any bird would do as much to save his home.

"Mr. Thrasher Found Himself Looking into the Fierce Round Eye of a Strange, Box-like Thing"

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Of course I could not have that meddlesome person finding out the secrets of the Meadow," he said, modestly.

But all the Birds thought he was a great hero. After a while they forgot they had ever called him proud. And "as brave as Mr. Thrasher" came to be a common saying in the Meadow.

XVIII

HOW CHICKOREE DID HIS ERRAND

MRS. GOLDFINCH finished preening the longest feather in her pretty wing, then flew to the lilac bush and began to call her son.

"Perchickoree, Perchickoree, Chickoree, Chickoree!"

The ladies in the big house said that she was singing; but she was not, she was really calling her son.

"Chickoree, come, come, Chickoree, I want you. Where are you?" she called.

With a rush and a flutter little Chickoree lighted by her side. "Now I want you to be a good bird and do an errand for me," said his mother. "Are your feathers smooth? Is your bill clean?"

Chickoree gave his wings a little shake, obediently wiped both sides of his bill on the lilac

twig, and waited to hear what the errand was.

"I want you to go over to the big pear-tree by the old white house. If you find Mrs. Purple Finch at home, tell her I should be pleased to have her come over to tea to-night. Just notice, as you fly along, whether or not Mrs. Catbird is still staying at the high blueberry bush. Don't stop to play on the way, and look out for the Perkins Cat."

Off started Chickoree, vaulting in pretty curves through the air, singing softly as he flew. He felt very proud to think he was allowed to go so far from home alone.

Away he went across the road, taking good care not to fly anywhere near the home of the Perkins Cat. In a corner of the Meadow he saw a big, plump thistle that, he thought, had doubtless escaped his mother's notice. Down he went to examine it.

Another little Goldfinch who had reached it before him flew up at him with a whoop. Away the two went bounding and vaulting through the air, laughing and chuckling, having the finest game of tag imaginable. But the stranger

proved the swifter on his wings, and soon disappeared.

Then Little Chickoree settled down on a big stalk of goldenrod to get his breath and sat a bit, forgetting all his mother said about stopping or playing on the way.

The sun was warm. The breeze swayed the stalk gently. Very likely Chickoree dozed a moment, for when a large bird in a slate-colored suit lighted near him he was greatly startled. But remembering something about his errand, he piped out in a weak little voice, "Oh, mother says won't you come over to tea to-night!"

"What's that?" said Mrs. Catbird in such a sharp, surprised tone that poor little Chickoree took to his wings and flew away.

"Well, of all things!" said Mrs. Catbird to herself. "Why in the world has Mrs. Goldfinch invited me to tea to-night? I suppose I might's well go, though I must say it's very strange, I am so little acquainted with her." Mrs. Catbird was a rather quiet, unsocial person, and it was seldom that she accepted invitations.

That evening, a little before sunset, Mrs. Cat-

bird carefully dressed her feathers, settled her black cap on the crown of her head and flew over to Mrs. Goldfinch's.

She did not go in a straight line, by any means. She passed so quietly from bush to bush, flying low, that no one would have dreamed there was a Catbird around.

When Mrs. Goldfinch saw her coming she exclaimed in surprise, "Why, can Mrs. Catbird be coming to call as late as this?"

"Oh, mother, she isn't coming to call; she is coming to tea. I got mixed up and asked her 'stead of Mrs. Purple Finch," said little Chickoree, who had not found courage before to tell his mother of the dreadful mistake he had made. Then he flew away in shame.

Mrs. Goldfinch smothered a little shriek of dismay and went forward to welcome her guest. But imagine her feelings! Mrs. Purple Finch and herself were seed-eaters. She had prepared a dainty supper of many nice seeds, but she knew Mrs. Catbird was a great meat-eater, liking grasshoppers and small insects, and poor Mrs. Goldfinch hadn't a bit of meat in the pantry.

The Home of Mr. and Mrs. Goldfinch

How mortified she was! What kind of housekeeper would she be called!

As she talked with Mrs. Catbird she tried and tried to plan what she could do about it. But she could think of nothing. She could see the fine thistle near by that she had hoped her friend, Mrs. Purple Finch, would enjoy. There was also plenty of ragweed seed and some white crumbs, that a little girl had scattered when she ate her luncheon on the stone wall that noon.

As Mrs. Goldfinch was not very well acquainted with Mrs. Catbird, the situation was all the harder for her. She talked and talked about one thing and another till she hardly knew what she was saying. It grew later and later, but still she did not dare to say anything about having supper.

Mrs. Catbird was very polite and pleasant. She admired that part of the Meadow Mrs. Goldfinch had chosen for her home. She said many pleasant things about her house.

"What a charming dining-room you have, Mrs. Goldfinch," she said at last, glancing up

into a pretty wild cherry-tree that grew very near, "and how convenient it is!"

Mrs. Goldfinch's heart gave such a jump of joy at the idea that her wings actually fluttered, and she flew up into the air. Mrs. Catbird quickly followed, and before Mrs. Goldfinch really knew what she was doing she was leading the way up to the cherry-tree dining-room.

Mrs. Catbird at once set about helping herself in the most informal manner, going from branch to branch gathering small insects. She praised and praised the supper and said everything tasted so good.

Mrs. Goldfinch, although she did not eat much herself, was so pleased that she could not refrain from uttering a gay little warble now and then. The cherry-tree, she felt, had saved her reputation as a good housekeeper.

When supper was over and Mrs. Catbird started home at last she urged Mrs. Goldfinch to come and dine with her soon. "Oh, there is your little son," she said, catching sight of Chickoree, who was hiding in a bush. "What a dear little bird he is! He must save you many

steps flying around and doing your errands for you. Well, I must be going, good night. I've had such a pleasant time."

Mrs. Goldfinch smiled to herself. She thought she would wait till Chickoree was older before she sent him on very important errands.

XIX

CRESTY KINGFISHER'S FIRST FISH

ONE morning, very early, when the Creek was shining and sparkling in the sun, two young fishermen might have been seen flying swiftly toward its banks.

Cresty Kingfisher was the first to reach the dead limb of the birch that overhung the water. He was annoyed when his companion lighted just above him. "I have decided to fish here," he said.

"Ho!" laughed Chunky Kingfisher, "I found this place yesterday. Have you fished here before?"

Young Cresty hesitated. How he hated to own that this was the very first time he had ever gone fishing by himself.

For many days—but that was when he was a little fellow—he had lived in a cave, which his parents had dug in the bank of the Creek. His parents had worked hard to supply him, and his

brothers, with plenty of the food they liked best: fresh fish.

Then, when he was larger, Cresty had gone with his father and watched him at his angling, till the little bird was sure he knew all there was to know about catching fish.

That very morning he had teased so hard to go by himself, that at last it was decided for him to try his luck.

"He has his oil waterproof on," said his mother, "and he can't get wet."

The oily waterproof, which Cresty always wore spread all over his feathers, did not hide his beautiful gray-blue coat, or his light vest. About his neck was a broad band, now of reddish tinge, that would turn to blue as he grew older. His wings and tail were short. Like all the Kingfisher family he wore on his head a large crest. And he really was a wise little bird for one so young.

Now, instead of owning that this was his first day of fishing, he turned to his companion. "Did you have good luck yesterday?" he inquired.

"Good luck! Well, if you could have seen the big fish I got!" cried Chunky proudly. "Maybe his mate will come by here and you can get him. I'll go on up Creek and you can try." And Chunky, good-naturedly, flew along. For it was a law of the Kingfisher tribe that every bird should fish by himself.

Little Cresty perched far out on the dead limb of the birch and peered down into the stream below. How the water gleamed and sparkled!

"Suppose the mate to Chunky's big fish was right there under that rock! Was that he coming?" Cresty drew himself together. "Oh, pshaw! 'twas nothing but a baby fish. Let it go! No," Cresty decided, "I'm not going to dive for that little thing. I'm after big fish."

There! there was a gleaming fin, coming, oh, so swiftly! Cresty shot from the limb, head first. A splash! A dive! "Plunk," said the Creek, as he struck it. But he struck it just a second too late. The owner of the shining fin was gone.

Quite disconcerted Cresty returned to his perch. A funny little figure he made with his

"'Oh, Pshaw! I'm not Going to Dive for That Little Thing. I'm after Big Fish'"

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big crested head and his short, thick body. His oil waterproof coat shed every drop of water. Again he set himself to watch earnestly. How he wished that the mate of that big fish might be his! Far up the stream he heard Chunky diving again and again. But every time he tried it himself the silver fish slipped away.

For a long time Cresty sat on the limb, watching, waiting, learning to be patient.

Then again, a gleam of light in the stream! Cresty made ready. "Ah, here he comes! A big one!" With a "plunk" Cresty hurled himself into the water. His bill closed over his prize.

"I've got him! I've got him! I've got him!" With a cry of triumph Cresty rose from the water, flew back to his perch, and at once swallowed the fish.

Then he started for home. How he raced along! He could not fly fast enough.

"Here comes our fisherman. Did you catch anything?" inquired his mother.

"Catch anything!" said Cresty, trying in vain to speak carelessly. "I met Chunky and he was

telling about the big fellow he caught; but I guess if he'd seen the fish *I* pulled out, he wouldn't say so much."

"Was he very big, Cresty?"

"Big! Well, you know that old monster that hides under the white rock? Well, the one I got was just about twice as big."

"Why, Cresty," cried his mother, greatly delighted, "how did you manage it? What a breakfast he must have made you. How could you get him out of the water?"

"Oh, that was easy enough," bragged Cresty.

His mother was much impressed. She confided to Mr. Kingfisher her belief that Cresty would become a very noted fisherman.

Cresty hastened away to find Chunky and tell him of his luck. Then he told each of his brothers and sisters about his catch. And every time he told the story the fish he had caught grew a little larger. But as the day passed Cresty ceased to brag and became very quiet.

His mother, who was busy bringing dinner to the other children, looked at him anxiously. Yes, as time went on Cresty felt very badly in-

deed. His mother wondered if his big breakfast had disagreed with him. But that was not the trouble with the little Kingfisher.

He kept looking at the nice, plump fish his brothers were enjoying. Oh, how good they looked to him! But he did not dare say a word.

"There, Cresty," said his mother at last, "you might have this little perch, but of course you don't want it after all you've eaten."

"Oh, mother," cried Cresty, unable to stand it any longer, "I do want it. Yes, I do!"

"What, want more dinner after eating the biggest fish in the Creek!"

"Well, perhaps he wasn't the very biggest," owned Cresty.

"But a great big one, at any rate," said his mother.

"Maybe not a very big one," said little Cresty, hanging his head. "I swallowed him so quick, mother, I guess, maybe, he might have been a little one, for I'm dreadfully hungry now."

How Mrs. Kingfisher laughed. "Oh, Cresty, that fish must have grown some after you swallowed it. You shall have this perch, dear, and

I'll get you another. I've seen other fishermen who would go hungry if all they ate was what they caught themselves. But you'd never think it to hear them talk."

XX

WHAT A LITTLE BIRD TOLD

"OH, do come with me," called Mrs. Goldfinch to Mrs. Robin one evening, as she flew past the pine-tree, "I'm going over to see Mrs. Purple Finch."

"I wish I were able to," called back Mrs. Robin. "I've just eaten dinner and——"

That was all Mrs. Goldfinch heard. She flew along, up and down in pretty curves through the air, until she reached her friend's.

"Mrs. Robin would have come, too, if she had felt able," she told Mrs. Purple Finch. "She had just eaten her dinner and——"

"Probably it hurt her," interrupted Mrs. Purple Finch. "She eats too much, in my opinion. It's too bad she's sick. She ought to let those angleworms alone; seeds would be much better for her."

Mr. Kingfisher, on his way home from the

Creek, lighted near by. "What's that?" he asked, "Mrs. Robin sick? Been eating too much? Well, I saw her over on the cherry-tree yesterday, and she seemed to be making good use of her time. She ought to live on fish, that's the only decent food. My little boy, Cresty, caught his first fish yesterday. He was so tickled he thought it was a whale." And Mr. Kingfisher flew off, laughing as he went.

Mrs. Nuthatch put her head out the window as he flew past the oak-tree. "What's the news?" she called.

"Oh, Mrs. Robin's sick," answered Mr. Kingfisher. "She's over-eaten, on cherries, probably. Guess her friends are worried about her. When will you people learn to live on nice fresh fish?" and on he went.

Mrs. Nuthatch dropped her mending and hurried over to Mrs. Chickadee's. "What do you think," she cried, "Mrs. Robin's' most dead! She's eaten so many cherries that her friends don't expect her to live."

"Oh dear, oh dear, how dreadful!" said Mrs. Chickadee. "Come, Chickadee-dee, go quickly

for your grandmother. She's such a good nurse, she'll know what to do."

Little Chickadee-dee grabbed his black cap and tore off to the woods at a great rate.

He found Mrs. Song Sparrow visiting Grandma Chickadee. "Oh come," he cried, "Mrs. Robin's dying! The cherries killed her!"

"Blackberry wine will bring her to. Fly for the doctor!" ordered Grandmother Chickadee, and off they all flew.

Doctor Finch was just starting for his club, but he changed his course, and he and Mrs. Song Sparrow, and Mrs. Nuthatch, and Mrs. Chickadee, and Grandma Chickadee, and little Chickadee-dee hurried as fast as they could fly along the Creek.

And when they reached the pine-tree, what do you suppose? There was Mrs. Robin singing away in the top branches.

"What *is* the matter?" she chirped in great surprise.

"Why! Why! Aren't you dead?" gasped Mrs. Song Sparrow.

Doctor Finch looked at his patient critically. "She doesn't seem to be," he said wisely.

"Of course I'm not dead! Who told you such a thing?" cried Mrs. Robin.

"Why, a little bird told me you had eaten so many cherries you were nearly dead!" said Mrs. Song Sparrow.

"Eaten so many cherries I was dead! Well, of all things!" cried Mrs. Robin, who had a very big appetite and was rather ashamed of it. "Why, I've hardly spent tent minutes in the cherry-tree to-day."

"Oh, dear Mrs. Robin, it was a happy mistake," trilled Mrs. Song Sparrow.

"Quite a mistake," said Mrs. Robin tartly. "Why, I'd just had dinner and should have gone calling with Mrs. Goldfinch, but I wasn't able to. I had to sing baby Bobbie and Speckles to sleep. I never felt better in my life!"

"Dear me, madam, one can't depend on all one hears. You certainly are looking well," said Doctor Finch. "Perhaps, since I am here, I might suggest a little lighter diet. But you

"'Why, Mrs. Robin, a Little Bird Told Me You Had Eaten so many Cherries You Were Nearly Dead!'"

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certainly are looking very well," and Doctor Finch departed for his club.

Mrs. Song Sparrow, and Mrs. Nuthatch, and Mrs. Chickadee, and Grandma Chickadee, and little Chickadee-dee departed, too, since Mrs. Robin did not ask them to stay. And of course Bobbie and Speckles were awake by this time, and Mrs. Robin had to sing them to sleep again.

XXI

MRS. CEDAR WAXWING'S ADOPTED CHILD

THERE was trouble in the Orchard. From the Baldwin apple-tree came the cry of a baby Robin, who called and called for some one to come to him. All the morning long poor little Squaretail had been crying. He was, oh, so hungry!

Mrs. Cedar Waxwing, swinging herself to and fro on the very tip-top of the cedar-tree, heard the cries but, at first, did not trouble herself about them.

Mrs. Waxwing was extremely fond of cedar-trees. In the spring, when she had discovered this one in the garden near the Orchard, she at once told Mr. Waxwing that their home must be near that spot.

Perhaps she knew that the soft fawn-colors of her coat looked well against the dark background of the cedar. It was a lovely coat which she wore, lit up with pretty touches of color.

On her head was a crest like a little bonnet. A velvety black line ran back of the crest. The light front of her coat shaded into soft yellow. A narrow band of bright yellow decked the end of her tail. And on her dainty wings were dashes of scarlet, like drops of sealing-wax. That was why she was called Mrs. Waxwing.

Although she was so beautifully dressed, and might have been one of the leaders in society, Mrs. Waxwing chose to live a very quiet life. She mingled little with the Orchard people. She was a gentle bird with very elegant manners. In fact, all the Waxwing family were noted for their fine manners.

Above all Mrs. Waxwing never meddled with any of her neighbors' affairs. But this morning, as the cries of the baby bird continued, she grew uneasy and anxious.

At last she could stand it no longer. Swiftly she flew to the Baldwin apple-tree and peeped into the nest. Sure enough, there was a poor little Robin child all alone, crying with all his might.

"Oh, what is the trouble? Hush, hush!

Don't cry so! I'll bring you something soon," said Mrs. Waxwing, and hurried away after food.

All day long, when she was not busy caring for her own children, she fed the starving bird. Soon she learned that because of an accident that befell them the parents of the little Robin would never come to him again.

Then Mrs. Waxwing showed her true goodness of heart. From that time, in spite of her many cares, she gave little Squaretail the same loving attention that her own children received.

Oh, how much the little fellow ate! And how fast he grew! Soon he was trying his wings and fluttering on the edge of the nest. "I want to fly! I want to fly!" he cried.

"Come, then, I'll show you how," encouraged Mrs. Waxwing.

Such a time as she had with him! In spite of her patient teaching Squaretail only succeeded in fluttering down to the ground, where he remained crying loudly. Mrs. Waxwing had to coax him for nearly half a day before he gained courage to fly to the cedar-tree. But oh, how

"'Oh, What Is the Trouble? Hush, Hush! I'll Bring You Something Soon,' Said Mrs. Waxwing"

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proud she was when at last he reached its thick branches!

There was just one thing about her adopted child that troubled Mrs. Waxwing greatly. His voice was very strong, and his loud cries always made her nervous. Her own voice was low and gentle. She never raised it above a soft lisping call. She tried patiently to teach little Squaretail to be less noisy.

Day after day she gave him, and her own children, careful lessons in manners. She really took more pains with the little Robin than with any of the others.

At last she felt proud of Squaretail, who tried very hard to be as polite as his foster brothers. He was a fine, strong little bird, and could dig angleworms now as fast as any young Robin.

Mrs. Waxwing was fond of talking about him and telling her friends what a wonderful little bird he was. One afternoon, when several of the members of the Waxwing family called on her, she was much pleased to introduce him to them. "This is my adopted son, Squaretail,"

she said, and was delighted with the pretty way he bowed.

Little Squaretail found himself closely seated on the limb of an apple-tree in a row with five gentle Waxwings, three on one side of him, two on the other. They were all eager to see the little Robin they had heard so much about. They talked together in their gentle, lisping voices.

Squaretail sat very still and behaved very politely. At last Mrs. Waxwing excused herself for a moment and flew to a lower branch of the tree. There she quickly captured a fine, large caterpillar.

Delighted with her success she returned to her guests and passed the delicacy to the first Waxwing at the end of the branch. She in turn handed it to her neighbor, who at once presented it to the next Waxwing, who in turn passed it politely to little Squaretail.

Now little Squaretail had sat still just about as long as he could. He was very hungry and was longing to get down and dig for worms. So when that fat, juicy caterpillar was thrust into

his very bill by his neighbor, little Squaretail gave a sudden gulp and, to his mother's horror, swallowed the whole of it.

Poor Mrs. Waxwing nearly fell from the tree, she was so ashamed. And yet she felt that Squaretail's seeming greediness was partly her own fault. She had neglected to tell the little Robin that when a treat like that was passed about, the Waxwings thought it polite for each one to take it and at once pass it on to his next neighbor. Indeed, the Waxwings alone among all birds were noted for this practise. No wonder the little Robin had made the mistake.

Mrs. Waxwing, who had been so proud of his manners, tried to hide her feelings. "There, Squaretail," she told him kindly, "it's hard for a little bird to sit still so long. You may fly down on the ground now, and dig if you want to."

Her friends tried to console her. "He is a fine, strong bird," they said, "and will be a credit to you. But it is too much to expect that a Robin will ever have the manners of a Waxwing."

XXII

THE JUDGE AND THE BABY SHOW

GRANDMA CHICKADEE said it was no use talking, there ought to be a bird baby show that summer.

Everybody agreed that there were a great many beautiful babies in the Meadow. All the bird mothers and fathers had worked hard to feed and care for their children, and they thought it would be fine to have a show. So Mrs. Robin and Mrs. Song Sparrow and Mrs. Goldfinch were appointed as a committee to arrange for one. When Lady Oriole promised to come and to bring Little Lord Baltimore, the three knew the affair would be a success.

Each bird mother, who was consulted about the show, was delighted with the idea, and each one had some new plan to offer.

Mrs. Kingfisher thought they ought to have a diving contest in the Creek, and give a prize to

the best diver. The committee hardly knew what to say to that; they did not like to own that little Cresty Kingfisher and his brothers were the only birds in the Meadow who knew anything about diving. They told Mrs. Kingfisher they would have to think it over.

Mrs. Goldfinch wanted them to have races, she was certain her little Chickoree would win, he was such a fine flyer.

Mrs. Cedar Waxwing was anxious to have a worm-digging contest. She knew her adopted son, Squaretail, could dig worms faster than other little birds.

The committee decided there must be prizes for the prettiest bird baby, the smartest bird baby, the fattest one, the best-mannered baby and for the baby with the sweetest voice.

Then the question arose, who should be the Judge? That did not trouble them long. "I'll fly over and ask Dr. Finch," said Mrs. Song Sparrow, "he knows all about babies."

Dr. Finch hated like everything to be judge of that baby show. He knew that if he decided that little Sally Song Sparrow was the prettiest

bird, all the other bird mothers would be jealous, and very likely employ some other doctor. But he did not dare refuse Mrs. Song Sparrow. "I'll come if I can," he promised.

When at last the day of the event arrived, every mother bird in the Meadow spent a very busy morning. Each baby had to be scrubbed, and all his feathers nicely dressed. Then he was told just how to behave, and had to practise making pretty bows, while his mother admired him and just knew her own baby was the prettiest and sweetest of all.

The afternoon of the show was bright and warm. The hay in the Beautiful Meadow had been cut and the haystacks were heaped up. Very early the babies began to arrive.

Mrs. Bluebird came first with her beautiful triplets. They sat very close together on a little twig, and oh, they did look cunning! They kept very quiet and were such good birdlings. Once in a while their mother would bring them some nice insect. Then they would thank her in their soft little voices and flutter their tiny wings.

Mrs. Kingfisher arrived next with Cresty and

Mrs. Bluebird Came First with Her Beautiful Triplets"

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her five other children. The six began to tease to go to fish in the Creek.

Mrs. Cedar Waxwing's children sat in a row very close together, and little Squaretail sat with them and behaved very nicely.

Mrs. Robin and Mrs. Song Sparrow and Mrs. Goldfinch wanted all the babies to be seated near together, so the Judge could easily look them over and decide which was the prettiest bird baby, which was the fattest, and so on. But it was hard for those babies to keep still.

"I do wish the Judge would come," Mrs. Robin kept saying; but the Judge was late.

Mrs. Yellowbird's pretty children kept flitting about among the leaves. Mrs. Robin had had a hard time getting Speckles and Bobbie cleaned up ready for the show, and now she could hardly stop them from getting down on the ground and digging for worms.

Young Golden-wing and little Lord Baltimore were there, but they did not attract any more attention than any of the other children. The bird mothers flew about admiring all the babies.

"They are the finest lot of babies ever raised in the Beautiful Meadow," said Grandma Chickadee.

"They certainly are," agreed Mrs. Goldfinch; "but I do wish the Judge would come."

But Dr. Finch was late, very late indeed, and all the babies grew very restless.

Pretty soon those birds simply could not be good and sit still any longer. Little Peter Catbird started in to chase his cousin, Brownie Thrasher. Chickoree Goldfinch began to sing a funny little baby warble, and his mother could not stop him. Cresty Kingfisher and his brothers made for the Creek, and began to splash and dive.

Confusion reigned among all the babies, and their mothers could not keep them in order. Bobbie Robin, Speckles and Squaretail jumped down on the ground and started to dig worms, hard as they could dig.

Just then Dr. Finch's errand-bird arrived with word that Dr. Finch had been called away to see a patient (and lucky enough it was for him) and couldn't come to judge the show.

"Oh dear me, what shall we do! Whom can we get for Judge at this late hour? Those babies are getting perfectly wild," cried Mrs. Robin.

"Why," purred a soft voice, almost in Mrs. Robin's ear. "I'll be Judge. I'd just as soon as not," and the Perkins Cat walked round the side of a haystack!

Such a shriek as went up at the sight of that obliging cat! Every bird mother called a warning to her children. Such a mad scrambling as those babies made for safety.

It tickled the Perkins Cat so to see them that he laughed till he rolled over and over, and waved his paws in the air.

"My, aren't they fine birdlings! Aren't they pretty! Aren't they fat! I know which one should have the prize," he said.

Mrs. Robin and Mrs. Thrasher flew at him to drive him home, they had done it before and knew how. "Who ever heard of a cat's being Judge of a bird baby show!" screamed Mrs. Robin.

"Pooh! Pooh! It's easy enough. Little

Squaretail should have the prize. He minded quickest when he heard his mother's warning. He should have the prize," declared the Perkins Cat, as he ran home fast as he could go.

"He is right, if he is only a cat," said Mrs. Robin, and the others on the committee agreed with her.

So little Squaretail was given a prize, to the delight of Mrs. Cedar Waxwing, his foster-mother. And all the little birds were allowed to have a party, since they did not have to be judged.

They chased each other about and played games. They sang and ate the biggest supper, sat up very late and had the greatest fun that ever was.

They really were the finest lot of bird babies ever raised in the Beautiful Meadow along the Creek.

DESCRIPTIONS OF BIRDS MENTIONED

DESCRIPTIONS OF BIRDS MENTIONED

CHICKADEE (BLACK-CAPPED TITMOUSE)

Titmouse family

Length about 5 inches.

Upper parts gray. Top of head, nape and throat black. Underneath whitish, sides and belly light buff. Wings and tail edged with white. Chickadee is a friendly, cheery little fellow, of downy plumage. He hunts the trees over for insect eggs and bugs. His call is a lively chickadee-dee-dee-dee. Towards spring he utters a plaintive phœbe call.

Nest is sometimes hollowed out by the Chickadees in a decayed tree. Sometimes placed in a natural cavity of apple-tree, or an old Woodpecker's hole is used.

Resident.

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH

Nuthatch family

Length about 6 inches.

Upper parts bluish-gray. Top of head and nape

black. Sides of head white. Underneath throat and breast white, reddish on belly. Wings and tail dark, marked with black and white. Bill long and strong.

A bird that does much good by feeding on the destructive insects that are concealed under the rough bark of trees. A great acrobat.

Nest is hollowed out in a tree and nicely lined. Often deserted holes, that have been hollowed out by other birds, are used.

Resident.

DOWNY WOODPECKER

Woodpecker family

Length 6.5 to 7 inches.

Upper parts black striped with white; a red patch on the back of the head. Underneath white. Tail wedge-shaped, the outside feathers barred with black and white. A stout bill which is used as a chisel.

This bird has no song, but utters a clear call. Is fond of drumming on hollow trees.

Female lacks the scarlet cap.

Nest is in a hole which he hollows out in a dead limb. In the fall he often digs out another hole in which he shelters himself winter nights. His deserted homes are often used by other birds.

Resident.

NORTHERN SHRIKE

Shrike family

Length 9.5 to 10.5 inches.

Upper parts bluish-gray; a black stripe passes through the eyes and extends back of them. Underneath light grayish. Wings and tail black, a white patch on wing; tail long, broadly edged and tipped with black. A dark, hooked bill.

The Northern Shrike pursues and kills many small birds, as the Juncos, Tree Sparrows, Chickadees. It overtakes and strikes them while they are endeavoring to escape. It is called the Butcher-bird. It often kills more than it can eat, and hangs its victims up in a tree. Can imitate the call of other birds.

Winter resident, roves about.

JUNCO

Finch family

Length 5.5 to 6.5 inches.

Upper parts slate-colored. Head and neck very dark. Underneath, throat and upper breast, dark slaty-gray; lower breast and belly white. Outer tail feathers, white. Bill light.

Female has lighter plumage.

The Juncos go about in bands and become quite tame in severe weather when food is scarce. It is also called the Snowbird.
Winter resident, rovers.

BLUEBIRD

Thrush family

Length 6.5 to 7 inches.
Upper parts azure-blue. Underneath, throat and breast cinnamon-red, belly white. Tail broad. Eyes large. Has a remarkably sweet call. Returns north very early. Destroys many caterpillars and cankerworms.
Female has duller plumage.
Nest is made in holes of trees, in deserted Woodpeckers' holes or in boxes put up in trees.
Summer resident; a few remaining during the winter.

ROBIN

Thrush family

Length 9 to 10 inches.
Upper parts dark olive-gray; head blackish, marked with white about the eyes. Underneath, throat streaked with black and white; breast chestnut-

brown or brick-red. Wings and tail dark. Outer feathers of tail tipped with white.
Female of duller plumage.
It destroys many insect pests in the orchard. Can express by his voice many different emotions.
Nest made of mud, weeds and grass.
Resident, but only a few remain in winter.

SONG SPARROW

Finch and Sparrow family

Length about 6.5 inches.
Upper parts streaked with brown and gray; top of head reddish-brown. Underneath whitish, much streaked with dark brown. A brown stripe on each side of throat, and a very dark spot on breast. Tail grayish-brown. A contented, cheerful bird, a beautiful and constant singer with many varied songs.
Nest is placed low, on the ground or in a bush.
Resident; a few birds stay during the winter.

CATBIRD

Mockingbird family

Length about 9 inches.
Upper parts slate-color; top of head black. Under-

neath lighter slate-color. Tail black with a reddish patch beneath it.

A fine singer and great mimic. As an imitator of the notes of other birds it is said to be second only to the Mockingbird. It destroys many plant-eating bugs.

Nest is usually made in a bush.

Summer resident.

FLICKER, GOLDEN-WINGED WOODPECKER

Woodpecker family

Length 12.5 to 13 inches.

Upper parts brown, barred with black; a white patch on rump that is conspicuous in flight. Head gray with a scarlet band on nape. Underneath, throat and breast lilac-brown, thickly spotted with black, belly buff with black dots. A black crescent on the breast. Many of the feathers of wings and tail black, lined with bright yellow. Bill long. The male has black patches, which the female lacks, on each side of head.

Although a Woodpecker, the Golden-wing feeds much on the ground. It eats quantities of ants, also grasshoppers, caterpillars, beetles, and other harmful insects. Has a loud, laughing call. It is also called the Yarup, Yellow Hammer, High Hole, etc.

Nests often in a hollow tree; other birds frequently occupy its deserted homes.
Resident; a few stay during the winter.

SUMMER YELLOWBIRD

Wood warbler family

Length about 5 inches.
Upper parts greenish-yellow; crown of head golden. Underneath bright yellow, streaked with brownish-red. Wings and tail dusky, edged with yellow.
Female of duller plumage.
Its song is a pleasing warble. It feeds almost entirely on insects and proves of great value in orchards and garden.
Nest is placed in bushes or trees, a dainty affair which sometimes has two or three stories when its owner is troubled by the Cowbird.
Summer resident.

COWBIRD

Blackbird family

Length 7.5 to 8 inches.
Upper parts iridescent black; head and neck gleaming brown. Underneath, breast gleaming brown.

Female brownish-gray, somewhat streaked beneath. It follows the cows about and feeds on insects that are disturbed. Its song is an unpleasant warble.

For a nest it uses that made by some other bird. It imposes its eggs on smaller birds for them to care for. Sometimes the female Cowbird even throws out an egg of the rightful owner of the nest, and leaves one of her own in its place.

Summer resident.

OVENBIRD

Wood warbler family

Length about 6 inches.

Upper parts olive-green; crown brownish-orange, bordered by two black lines. Underneath white, black spots on breast and sides.

A very shy bird, a walker. Its call of Teacher, Teacher, *Teacher,* TEACHER, TEACHER, begins softly and rapidly grows louder, is well known. In the spring at evening it sings a wonderfully sweet song, while it soars, like a lark, into the sky.

Nest is made on the ground. It is built of leaves, roots, etc., is shaped like a Dutch oven, with a little roof and an opening in the side.

Summer resident.

BALTIMORE ORIOLE

Blackbird family

Length 7.5 inches.

Upper parts black; lower back orange. Underneath brilliant orange. Wings with white band, a patch of orange on shoulders. Tail black, tipped with orange.

Female of duller plumage; general color olive-yellow, wings and tail brown. A gay bird, with a ringing, whistling song, valuable for its destruction of gipsy and brown-tail moths.

Nest—a deep pocket, woven of strings, hair, plant fibers, etc., usually suspended from a tall tree.

Summer resident.

BROWN THRASHER

Thrasher and Mockingbird family

Length about 11.5 inches.

Upper parts bright, reddish-brown. Underneath whitish, breast and sides much spotted with brown. Tail very long; two white bars on wing. Eyes yellow; bill dark, long and curved.

Female of somewhat duller plumage.

The Thrasher spends much time in scratching about the ground in the underbrush. It destroys

many grasshoppers, May beetles, grubs, etc. When alarmed it utters a sharp "chick" and makes a hissing noise; a splendid singer.

Nest is built of twigs and is sometimes lined with fine rootlets, is often placed in a pile of brush, sometimes on the ground.

Summer resident.

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH

Finch family

Length about 5 inches.

Upper parts bright yellow; crown black. Underneath yellow. Wings and tail black, edged and marked with white.

Female, above olive-brown, beneath yellowish.

In the winter the Goldfinch loses its gay suit and becomes a little greenish-brown bird with yellowish breast, and black and white wings and tail.

Goldfinches are fond of traveling about in flocks. Their flight is undulatory; they utter sweet little calls of "perchickoree" and "dearie." Their song is canary-like. They feed much on seeds of weeds.

Nest—a dainty affair of grass and moss with a soft lining.

Resident.

BELTED KINGFISHER

Kingfisher family

Length 12.5 to 13 inches.
Upper parts grayish-blue; head and back of neck heavily crested. Underneath white, a blue belt across breast. Wings and tail spotted and marked with white; tail short. Head is large and bill heavy and long.
Female has reddish bands instead of blue.
A haunter of streams and rivers, an expert fisherman, utters a loud rattling call as it flies.
Nest is a hole which it digs out of the side of the river bank.
Resident.

CEDAR WAXWING

Waxwing family

Length 7.5 to 8 inches.
Upper parts cinnamon-brown, rump grayish, head crested lilac-brown, forehead and sides of head black. Underneath, breast lilac-brown, belly yellowish. Wings and tail dark; bright red tip on some of the wing quills, tail with yellow band across end. Bill dark.

Female of duller plumage.

A roving, gipsy bird whose beautiful plumage is always smooth and in perfect order. They travel about in flocks and are said to be exceedingly polite to each other. They have no song and their call note is only a soft whisper. They are great eaters and are valuable for their destruction of cankerworms, etc. Also called the Cherry-bird and Bonnet-bird.

Nest is often made in an orchard, a loose structure.
Resident; roves about.

THE END

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